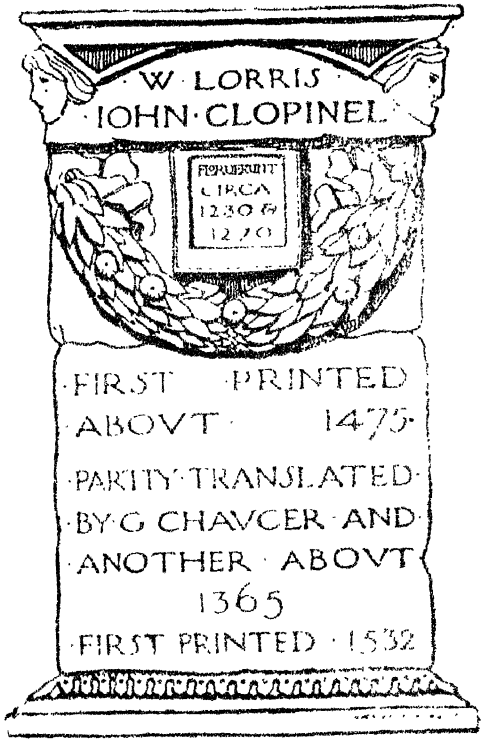
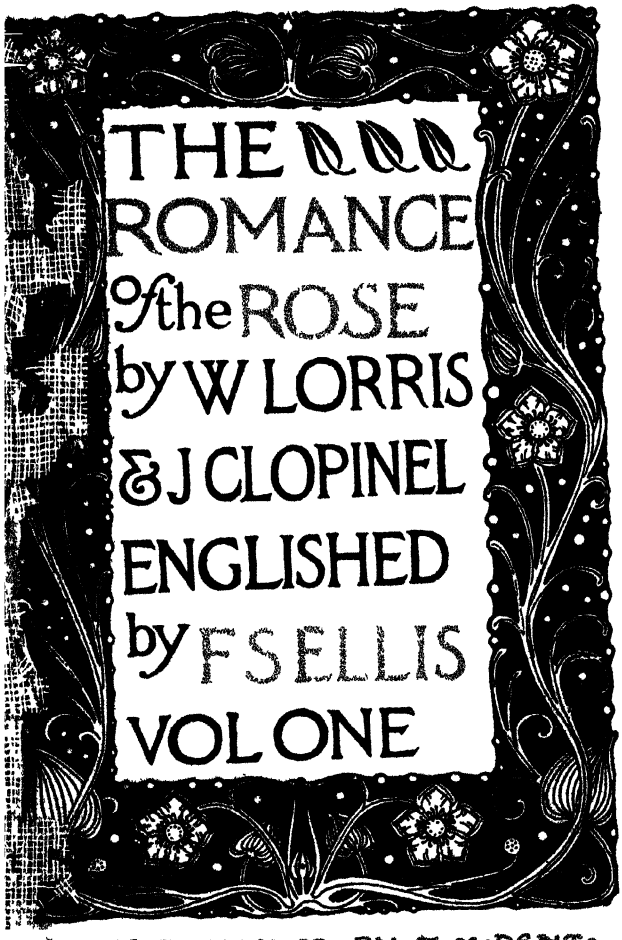

W·LORRIS
IOHN·CLOPINEL
FLORUERUNT
CIRCA
1230 &
1270
FIRST PRINTED
ABOVT 1475
PARTLY TRANSLATED
BY G CHAVCER AND
ANOTHER ABOVT
1365
FIRST PRINTED 1532

THE
TEMPLE
CLASSICS

THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

Englished and
Edited by
F. S. ELLIS


IDLENESS
AND THE
DREAMER



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PROLOGUE

Among the books which throw light on the lives, minds, and ways of men in the wonderful thirteenth century—the century of Roger Bacon, of St. Francis, of S. Louis, of S. Thomas Aquinas, of Duns Scotus, and of the youth of Dante—there are three which, while they had for three hundred years as great vogue as the most widely read of nineteenth-century romances enjoy for a few months, have, nevertheless, been neglected by succeeding ages to a degree that must be regretted. A knowledge and study of them will afford a far clearer insight into the daily life, and the spirit working within the people for whom they were written, than the annals of the wars that raged during the same period between kings and nobles. The three books referred to are "The Romance of the Rose," "Reynard the Fox," and the "Legenda Aurea, or Golden Legend." The first presents us with pictures of mediæval every-day life that we shall look for in vain elsewhere, till in the next century the lanterns of Froissart, Chaucer, and William Langland illumine the

darkness. The second presents us with a scathing political satire applicable to all time; and though the key to its special purpose and object has been irrecoverably lost, its brilliant humour and keen sarcasm on the follies of human nature are imperishable. The third, no one who cares to understand the spiritual atmosphere in which our ancestors lived and breathed can afford to neglect.

It has fallen to the lot of the writer of the present notice to have no small share in bringing "Reynard the Fox" and the "Golden Legend" under the notice of the reading public of to-day, and he has now the gratification of presenting the "Romance of the Rose" in such form as he hopes may find acceptance.

He is but too well aware that to produce an ideal translation of such a book would demand a knowledge of old French approaching that possessed by a Gaston Paris, or a Langlois; as intimate an acquaintance with mediæval lore as might be expected from the combined knowledge of a Skeat, a Furnivall, and a Gollancz, and the poetic capacity of a William Morris; while he is fully conscious of the degree to which he falls short of the requirements he has indicated. But the task having been proposed to him by two of the scholars above named, he became, on looking into the book, so greatly interested and fascinated by it, that he determined to undertake the

work, or he would rather say the pleasurable pastime; for he is fain to acknowledge that the eighteen months which were occupied by the actual translation embraced some of the most agreeably spent hours of a long life.

The task of translating the "Romance of the Rose" in its entirety has often been referred to as a gigantic undertaking, but it contains only eight thousand lines more than the "Divina Commedia," which has been translated into English innumerable times. The file of a newspaper for eighteen months, set aheap, would be an appalling task indeed to peruse with moderate attention; but taken in daily portions, one makes little of the business, dreary though it be—so has it been that the two-and-twenty thousand six hundred and eight lines of "The Romance of the Rose" have melted imperceptibly as the days followed on, the work of each presenting some pleasant variety.

The extreme popularity enjoyed by this famous book from the last quarter of the thirteenth to the close of the fifteenth century is attested by the fact that not less than two hundred manuscript copies of it have survived the waste of centuries (while of the "Canterbury Tales" no more than fifty-nine are known), and printed editions followed in rapid succession from about 1480 till 1538. But, strange to say, except the translation made by Chaucer, and

close observation of human nature. The thirteenth century lives before us.

How greatly Chaucer was indebted to his French predecessor can only be appreciated by those who will be at the pleasurable pains of studying the work of both poets; but as we read the earlier of the two, the conclusion forces itself upon us that Chaucer's mind was, so to speak, permeated with the "Romance of the Rose." It must not, however, be forgotten that both Chaucer and Jean de Meun were diligent students of Boethius "De Consolatione Philosophiae" and Alanus de Insulis "De Planctu Naturae." Here and there Chaucer has appropriated passages from the "Romance"; notably in the description of the refined and dainty manners of the lady prioress, which is found under another guise in Chapter LXXIII. of the "Romance." Nor is it easy to read Jean de Meun's dramatic picture of the jealous husband without feeling that it suggested to Chaucer the prologue to the wife of Bath's tale by way of a counterblast.

In considering the remarkable place that the "Romance of the Rose" holds in European literature, it is well to bear in mind that the first part was written more than a hundred years, and the second part seventy years, before Chaucer was born. When we turn to English literature contemporary with the work of Guillaume de

Lorris and Jean de Meun we cannot but be struck with a sense of humility at the wide gulf in human interest that lies between the two. A doubt steals over one whether there is not ground for the assertion sometimes heard made, that we were indebted to the inspiration of northern French architects and artists for the glories of our architecture, glass painting, and miniature painting in the thirteenth century.

Though the "Romance of the Rose" is commonly described and spoken of as one book, its two parts are in truth only nominally linked together by the names of the characters being carried on from the one to the other. The two parts are, in fact, the outcome of two widely differing minds, and though Jean de Meun professes to continue the work of his forerunner, his portion is altogether different from it, both as to style and purpose. Guillaume de Lorris sets out to write a love pastoral or idyll, and Jean de Meun, seeing its popularity, takes advantage thereof to give expression to the heterogeneous thought with which his brain teems.

Of the history of Guillaume de Lorris we know no more than the slight indications given by his continuator (Cap. LX. ll. 10991–11158). All that is known of Jean de Meun is likewise derived from the passage indicated above—namely, that he was born at Meun sur Loire, and was surnamed Clopinel (the Halt)

or greater justice be laid at the door of Boethius, from whom he derives his picture of the Golden Age, when all things were common and laws needless, or at that of Geoffrey Chaucer, for his charming poem of "The Former Age," drawn from the same source?

That Jean de Meun's utterances in this regard were taken by his contemporaries rather poetically than didactically may fairly be inferred from the favour with which the book was certainly received by persons of royal and of noble estate.

In considering the latter part of the "Romance of the Rose," and what it was that spurred its author on to give expression to the exhortations contained in it, it will not be beside the purpose to keep in view another popular book of the day which can scarcely have failed to come under his notice.

Towards the conclusion of the "Romance" it will be seen how Nature introduces her high-priest Genius, who holds forth at considerable length in praise of fecundity, assuring those who follow and carry out Nature's laws thereon, of a participation in the joys of heaven, in a manner somewhat startling.

But it seems by no means improbable that Jean de Meun intended this as a counterpoison to the doctrines which had just then been specially brought forward and enforced by the

Dominican monk Jacobus de Voragine, in his "Legenda Aurea, or Golden Legend." Not only is celibacy exalted as being in itself a virtue, but the example is held up to special admiration of wedded couples who lived as celibates in despite of the laws of God and Nature.

M. Langlois, while pointing out certain defects that attach to the work, thus sums up the merits of its author: "Jean de Meun is not only a scholar and a man of letters, he is also a poet, the greatest perhaps of the thirteenth century. In this respect he has commonly been too little considered, inasmuch as other more strikingly brilliant qualities of his mind have absorbed the attention of the critics who have occupied themselves with him, and because, moreover, the numerous poems embedded in his 'Romance' are somewhat obscured by the setting. How fine a passage is that (Chapter XXXV.) in which he contrasts the careless happiness enjoyed by the labourer with the perpetual anxieties of the banker or money-dealer, who never knows when he is rich enough; of the merchant whose desire for gain is likened to the thirst of a man who fain would drink up the volume of the Seine; of the lawyer or physician each desirous only of selling his services for filthy lucre; of the divine who preaches but for money, and of those heapers up of riches who are mere

slaves to the wealth that they imprison in their coffers. . . . In a manner altogether different, we may remark, among other passages which bear the impress of real poetry, a magnificent description of a storm, with the return of fair weather (Chap. XCVIII.). . . . The parables, piled one upon another by the author to justify his attacks on the servitude of marriage and the isolation of the cloister, which represent in admirably natural and graceful miniatures the bird in the cage, the fish snared in a bag-net, the kitten that sees a mouse for the first time, and the filly that first catches sight of a horse (Chap. LXXV.).

"The episodes also of Venus and Adonis (Chapters LXXXVII.–VIII.) and of Pygmalion (Chapter CVI.) are charming idylls, which may worthily hold comparison with the pages of Ovid, whence they are imitated. We may further remark that no other author of the thirteenth century writes with such ease as Jean de Meun, his style being invariably on a level with the ideas he desires to express, now powerful and rugged, now graceful and gentle, but always clear, elegant, and picturesque; his verse is flowing and easy, and many of his couplets have become proverbial."

But one of the finest qualities of the author is his quiet humour, which peeps out as continually and as delightfully as it does in the verse

of Geoffrey Chaucer; it is that same subtle and ineffable quality of wit of which in our own century the author of the "Essays of Elia" is so great a master, and for which we love as well as admire and revel in him. Readers who take such an interest in the old French poet as he may justly claim, should study the admirable and exhaustive appreciation of him and his work in the article quoted above from the "Histoire de la langue et de la littérature Française, publiée, sous la direction de M. Petit de Julleville." *Paris*, 1878–1900. Vol. ii. pp. 105–60.

An excellent account of the book may also be read in Sir Walter Besant's "French Humorists," 1873. He well remarks that "it is not a congeries of dry and dead bones of antiquity, not a mass of mediæval fables, but a book full of ideas, information, and suggestion —a book warm with life."

Of the translation here submitted to the public no more need be said than that it has been a labour of love to the author, and that his only hope is, that it may bring an adequate return to the enterprising publisher who has consented to print it.

It has been made under the not inconsiderable difficulties of distance from libraries of reference, and from the society of scholars or kindred spirits whose advice would have been of the greatest value. For the manner in which

he has brought the story to a climax the translator is fully conscious that he is likely to receive more blame than praise, but before bestowing the former too freely he would ask the critic to read the chapters in old French relegated to the appendix. The appearance of one of these in English may be taken as an evidence that there was no desire to shirk the labour of translation, and though it may have a patchwork look for part to be in one language and part in the other, it is only to be said that the story of Pygmalion stands alone, and is free from the difficulties that bristle in the remainder.

Of obscurities in a work of such a date there can not fail to be many; even with all the scholarship that has been bestowed upon the texts of Chaucer and Shakespeare there are yet passages in their works that remain inexplicable. While Chaucer is credited with but a solitary pun or play on words, Jean de Meun, like Shakespeare, delighted in verbal acrobatics. It will be understood by those who have practised translation how hopeless it is to attempt to reproduce the word-play of one language in another. Good critic, ere you censure, try your hand.

F. S. ELLIS.

TORQUAY, *June* 26, 1900

FAULTS ESCAPED

Line 882, *for* "of loving kiss" *read* "of a kiss,"
,, 1297, *delete* "he was"
,, 1421, *in place of* "For wearied" *read* "Fore-wearied"
,, 1462, *read* "sweet odorous"
,, 1486, *for* "there" *read* "rare"
,, 1516, *read* "She wasted, pined"
,, 1640, *for* "Pourtrayed" *read* "Portrayed"
,, 2089, *for* "wondrous" *read* "yet 'tis"
,, 2764, *for* "whom" *read* "who"
,, 2841, *for* "who" *read* "whom"
,, 3153, *for* "she" *read* "her"
,, 3202, *read* "beneath love's smart;"
,, 4353, *for* "It is" *read* "Alone"
,, 4507, *insert comma after* "Thereby,"
,, 4696, *for* "men's" *read* "man's"
,, 4735, *for* "Flees;" *read* "Fleeth;"
,, 4805, *read* "They bind around her, while they scourge"
,, 5695, *for* "Pressed" *read* "Press"
,, 6197–9, *read* "Bethink you of Diogenes
And Heraclitus, both of these
Had"
,, 6549–50, *for* "where he conceived
Had been," *read* "where conceived
He'd been"

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS IN VOLUME I

Though the old English version takes no account of chapters or sections, it is deemed better for the sake of clearness to summarise the 108 *sections of which the work consists in their separate sequence, as they are given in the original text.*

For convenience of reference, the lines of the French text are marked F. in the margin according to the text of the edition printed in the "Bibliothèque Elzevirienne," Orléans, 1878. *C. represents the lines of the old English version as far as it goes, though a portion only is Chaucer's.*

Cap. I. F. 1–130. C. 1–134.

The question is raised as to the truth or falsity of dreams. The author affirms his belief in their fulfilment, and expresses his intention of relating a vision that befell him in the twentieth year of his age.

He entitles his narrative the "Romance of the Rose," out of compliment to a lady, who worthily bears the name of that fragrant flower, and with whom he is deeply in love.

Five years ago, as he lay on his bed on a May morning, he dreamed that he leapt from his couch, washed his hands and face, and issued forth into the fresh air, that he might enjoy the matin song of the birds. He wanders

companion is much alarmed at his temerity. While they are discussing the subject, Danger suddenly awakes, and roundly rates Fair-Welcome for bringing the Lover within reach of the Rose-tree.

Cap. XX. F.3029-40. C.3149-58. Danger chases Fair-Welcome and the Lover from out the close.

Cap. XXI. F.3041-72. C.3159-88. The Lover bitterly laments his hard lot, and declares that only those who have felt the pangs of disappointed love can understand and sympathise with his sufferings.

Cap. XXII. F.3073-3178. C.3189-3304. Wandering about the garden, a victim to despair, he is perceived by Reason from her high-built tower. She descends, and approaching him, asks the cause of his misery, tells him that Idleness did him but an ill turn when she admitted him to the garden, and counsels him to tear his mind away from the folly of love.

Cap. XXIII. F.3179-3218. C.3305-47. The Lover replies that he has made over his heart to the God of Love as his lord and master, who has locked and secured it. He then remembers that his master had counselled him to confide in a friend, and that he has one who is loyal and true of heart.

Cap. XXIV. F.3219-36. C.3348-68. He seeks out his friend forthwith, and opens his grief to him.

His friend reassures him, declaring that Danger is not nearly so formidable as he appears to be, and his best course is to caress and flatter his enemy. Hereat he feels his courage and confidence restored. Cap. XXV. F.3237–64. C 3369–94.

He approaches Danger, and explains to him that albeit he is the bounden servant of Love, he would not for his own weight in silver have willingly given him offence, or done anything to excite his wrath. Danger is somewhat appeased, and bids him serve Love if he will, but unless he desires to feel the weight of his club, he will do well to keep clear of the enclosure where the Roses flourish. Cap. XXVI. F.3265–3364. C.3395–3498.

His friend advises patience, and again reminds him that if he is courteous and polite to Danger he will find him less ferocious than he seems. Nevertheless the Lover remains oppressed with grief and misery.

While in this unhappy condition of mind the God of Love sends to him Franchise and Pity. They reason with Danger, who consents that Fair-Welcome may return to the disconsolate Lover. He reappears, takes the Lover by the hand, and leads him within the enclosure. Cap. XXVII. F.3365–3474. C.3499–3620.

At once he finds himself transported from hell to paradise. Approaching the Rose, he finds it more beautiful and attractive than ever. Fair-Welcome refuses to assent to his earnest Cap. XXVIII. F.3475–3596. C.3621–3752.

she has finished her discourse the Lover vows that it is to little purpose, for that Love has had his heart under his wing the while, and Reason's fair arguments but went in at one ear and out at the other.

Cap. XXXV. F.4953–5838. C.5239–5810. Reason continues to instruct the Lover as to the different kinds of love and friendship that exist in the world, contemns the folly of avarice, and of those who set their minds on the gifts and favours of Fortune, and teaches before all else the love of one's neighbour. If there were true love among men, she contends, there would be no need for kings or judges, who are but tyrants and oppressors.

[The old English translation breaks off abruptly at 5396 of the French text.]

Cap. XXXVI. F.5839–5888. Reason illustrates the evils of judges by the story of Appius and Virginius.

Cap. XXXVII. F.5889–6162. Reason continues her tirade on the folly of love and the fickleness of Fortune, interrupted and contested in her discourse by the Lover from time to time.

Cap. XXXVIII. F.6163–6440. Reason illustrates her argument by somewhat intricate allegories or parables of two rivers, the one bright and clear, the other foul and turbid; and of the palace of Fortune, the one half of which is beautiful and resplendent, while the other is ruinous and wretched.

Cap. XXXIX.–XLII. F.6441–7526.

The caprice of Fortune is illustrated by the histories of Nero, Emperor of Rome, Crœsus, King of Lydia, and the contemporary history of the destruction of Conradin and Manfred in Sicily by Charles of Anjou. The latter story is related under the allegory of a game at chess.

The Lover has complained in a former chapter of the freedom of speech used by Reason, who after a digression of several hundred lines now defends herself from the accusation.

The Lover once more declares himself the servant of Love, and says that if he were to submit himself to the dictates of Reason he must prove unfaithful to his master and to the Rose, which he is resolved shall never be, and tells her that if she pushes her argument further he shall take to flight.

For table of chapters and lines of the present version see the end of each volume.

A dream befell the author

'Twas in my twentieth year of age,
When Love doth all young hearts engage
To pay him toll, that on my bed
I lay one night, as custom led,
Asleep, when o'er my spirit fell
A wondrous pleasant dream that well
Delighted me, and nought therein
I saw but what did later win
Fulfilment, and I now in rhyme
Set forth the tale, to while your time
And glad young hearts, by Love's command.
And should or swain or maid demand
How that is called which now I write,
I answer "The Romance" it hight,
For lovers written, "of the Rose,"
Which doth Love's gentle art enclose.
Good is the matter, fair and true,
God grant that grace it find in view
Of her for whose behoof 'twas writ;
Worthy of love is she, and fit,
Before all other maids I swear,
The fragrant name of Rose to bear.

Five years have rolled their suns away,
Since in the amorous month of May
I dreamed this dream: O month of joy
That knows all nature to decoy
To mirth and pleasure; bush and brake
Alike their fresh spring raiment take
Of leaves that long in swaddlings lay
Close shrouded from the light of day,
While woods and thickets don their green
Rich mantling of resplendent sheen.

Then earth, though old, once more grows vain, **The sweetness of spring-tide**
And, cheered by balmy dews and rain,
Forgets her poverished drear estate
'Neath winter stern and obdurate;
For pride awaketh new desire
To dizen her in bright attire,
And thereto doth she fashion quaint
And fair habiliments, and paint
Them o'er with tints of varying hue,
Green herb, and flowers, white, red, and blue;
And tricked in such gay robes I ween
Old Earth loves dearly to be seen.
The merry birds that silence kept
While all the world 'neath winter slept,
And wild winds roared, and skies were grey
With rain, break forth, when cometh May,
In lusty note, and let sweet song
Proclaim their joy that winter's wrong
Is past, and now once more doth reign
Sweet spring-tide o'er old earth's domain.
Then nightingales with new-born voice
Through day and night make dulcet noise,
While larks on high, and in the brake
The woodwales, heavenly music wake;
And hearkening such sweet clamour, soon
Young hearts respond the amorous tune
In this sweet season of fair spring.
O dull the soul that carolling
Of birds delighteth not when they
The echoes wake in joyous May.

'Twas in this season of delight,
When all things love as if of right,

Envy spareth no man

Love to a friend, nor hath one good
Kind thought towards those who share her blood—
Yea, sorely 'twould her heart distress
Her sire to see in happiness.
Right cruel is the price she pays,
Who walketh thus in devious ways,
And through her cursed spirit she
Suffers forsooth most bitterly;
For in her villain mind doth rage
Torment more rude than thought can gauge
Whene'er she hears of kindly deed
Or worthy act; and sore doth bleed
Her venomous heart enduring this,
Which God's most righteous vengeance is
Upon her. Envy's evil tongue
Spares no man, be he old or young.
And if 'twas hers to know perchance
The noblest knight who honours France,
Or one whose fame lies over-sea,
She'd deal them slander equally.
And should their names so fair be found
As made her villain words redound
To eke their praise, then would she try
By mean insinuating lie
To undermine their fame some deal
With venomous wound no balm could heal.
I noted how she seemed to glance
Sideways, with tortuous peep askance,
And furtive leer turned all awry,
Half-closed her slanting evil eye.
Her habit seemed, forsooth, innate
That she towards no man cast a straight

And honest gaze, but one eye closed
She kept, as if forsooth she dozed;
Then suddenly 'twas lit with ire
If some fair thing she saw, and fire
Would burn therein, for loves she not
Aught good or beauteous, as I wot.

Heavy-eyed Sorrow

Sorrow.

Then standing Envy close beside,
Was fretful Sorrow, heavy-eyed
And dismal. By her deadly hue
'Twas clear her wretched spirit knew
Unending grief, and thus jaundice
Paled all her blood. E'en Avarice
Than she doth look less poor and lean,
For care and misery, well I ween,
And cruel chagrin and distress,
That day nor night know never cess,
She suffers, and through sickly woe
More lean and pale doth daily grow.
None suffereth martyrdom more dire
Than she, and this begetteth ire
Within her heart, as seemed to me,
And much I doubt if aught could be
Or said or done whereby to ease
Her rooted grief, or calm or please
Her cankered soul, or break the round
Of care wherein her life is bound!
Alike her face and garments wore
Marks of the cruel rage that tore
Her woeful heart. Her nails had scratched
Her cheeks, the while her hands had snatched

Eld once was fair

Is reached. 'Tis Time that maketh grow
All new-born things, and Time doth show
How all things change, and wear and waste;
'Tis he that hath our fathers chased
From off the earth. Of mighty kings
And emperors the dirge he sings,
And all, through Time, must pass away,
For he 'tis marks our dooming day.
And Time, who ne'er forgetteth aught,
Hath Eld forgotten not, but brought
His hand to bear upon her so
That feebler doth she surely grow
From day to day, until no more
She hath of strength, or notes of lore,
Than child that on its mother's knee
Or laughs or smiles unconsciously.

Yet natheless had Eld been in youth
A damsel fair, and sweet forsooth
To my sure knowledge, but I trow
Is sadly metamorphosed now—
Changed to a world-worn doting thing.
A great fur cloak for wrappering
She wore (methinks around her form
I see it yet) to keep her warm,
For agèd folk still dread the cold,
By nature's law, through many a fold.

Hypocrisy.

The image standing next was fit
To show right well a hypocrite.

Popeholy was the name she bore,
And on her face a mask she wore
Of righteousness, for her great care
It is to take men unaware,
And play them some base, shameful trick.
On first acquaintance is she quick
To waken pity by her sad
And simple piteous look, beclad
With simple, sweet, and saintly seeming;
But in this world no evil deeming
Exists, that rolls not through her brain.
The painting gave to her amain,
Kind, gentle semblance; debonair
And simple all her features were,
And both her pose and raiment done
In guise of some good convent nun.
A psalter held she in her hand,
As though the throne of God she fanned
With holy prayers, and saints invoked:
But never laughed she, smiled nor joked.
Good works pretendeth she to do,
As though nought else did she pursue
Since first she donned the shirt of hair.
Her wretched body, lean and spare,
All bloodless looked and deadly white,
Through daily fast and sleepless night.
For her, and those who share her lot,
The gate of Paradise I wot
Ne'er openeth, for the Gospel says:
They fast and make long prayers for praise
Of men, and thus they cast away
God's Kingdom at the dooming day.

The falseness of Hypocrisy

Poverty.

The sad estate of Poverty

Last Poverty, of whom I vouch,
No penny lay within her pouch,
Nor coat had she to sell for pelf
And buy a rope to hang herself.
Naked as any wretched worm,
She oft, in direful winter's term,
Nigh dies with misery and cold.
Nought else her body did enfold
Except a sack, from whence hung torn
Foul rags, for robe and mantle worn;
Therewith alone did she dissemble
Her nakedness, her limbs a-tremble,
Down in a corner, on the ground
Couched, like a beaten, shamefaced hound.
Alas! a dolorous fate hath she,
Cast out from all men's company.
Accursed the hour when man is born
To live in poverty forlorn:
Far better had he never been
Than naked, houseless, friendless seen.

Before these images I stayed
Some space; each one was well arrayed
In dazzling gold and azure bright,
By skilful limner deftly dight.
The wall was high, and built of hard
Rough stone, close shut, and strongly barred,
Enclosing round a garden vast,
Wherein no swain had ever passed;
Beyond all doubt a place most fair.
And I most gladly entry there

Had made, and plenteous measure he
Of thanks had won who showed to me
How, helped by steps or ladder tall,
My feet might scale the high-built wall.
O joy of joys! O dear delight,
If 'twere but given to me that height
To climb, and such sweet joyance win
As surely might be found therein.
This garden was a safe retreat
For hosts of nesting birds, and sweet
Their piping sounded from the trees,
The glory of the place; the breeze
Was redolent of woodland song,
Nor shall I be convict of wrong
In saying that it shields perchance
Three times as many birds as France
Contains elsewhere. The harmony
Thereof could scarcely fail to be
Such as would cheer the saddest wight,
And wake his soul to sweet delight.
To me more boundless was the pleasure
To hear those songs than words may measure,
And fain had I an hundred pounds
Paid straight to win within the bounds,
And see the gathered cloud of these
Sweet birds (God save them!) in the trees,
And list their tireless minstrelsy,
Which e'en love's dancing tunes outvie,
All piping clear, from untaught throats,
In ever varying wilding notes.
While hearkening to the matin chant
The small fowl sang, my soul a-pant

The birds' matin song

The Dreamer spies a gate

Became with longing for some mode
To win within this blest abode,
And searched, but vainly searched, alas!
For means, or fair or foul, to pass
The wall, but nought to help me found;
And then I vainly gazed around
For one who might, for love or meed,
Within that longed-for haven lead
My eager footsteps. Thus I stood,
With dire vexation well-nigh wood,
Until the thought possessed my mind,
That never yet was wall so blind
That careful diligence should fail
To find some door, or means to scale.
Hot-foot, the boundary's full extent
I traversed, heart and soul intent
Some aperture to spy; at last
Mine eye with eager joy I cast
Upon a wicket, straight and small,
Worked in the stern, forbidding wall,
And forthwith set myself to get
An entry there, whate'er might let.

III

Here is described how Idleness
Unto the Dreamer gave ingress.

FULL many a time with sounding blow
I struck the door, and, head bent low,
Stood hearkening who might make reply.
The horn-beam wicket presently
Was opened by a dame of air
Most gracious, and of beauty rare:

Her flesh as tender chicken's was; The fair dame Idleness
Her blond locks bright as bowl of brass;
Radiant her brow; of arching due
Her eyebrows; and well spaced the two;
Neither too small, nor yet too great
Her nose, but straight and delicate.
No falcon, I would boldly swear,
Hath eyes that could with hers compare.
Her breath was sweet as breeze, thyme fed;
Her cheeks, commingled white and red;
Her mouth a rosebud, and her chin
Well rounded, with sweet cleft therein.
Her tower-like neck, of measure meet,
The purest lily well might beat
For fairness, free of spot or wem.
'Twixt this and far Jerusalem
I trow were found none other such,
So fair to sight, so soft to touch.
Her bosom would outshine the snow
New-fallen, ere it soil doth show;
And all her body formed and knit
So well, as nought might equal it.
Much doubt I, if since Time had birth,
A fairer dame hath trod dull earth.

A chaplet on her brow was set
Of orfreys; never maiden yet
More lovesome looked, and though my days
I spent to sing her beauty's praise,
'Twere done but insufficiently.
A graceful silken robe wore she,
And on her head a garland bare
Of roses, which the orfreys fair

The sole care of Idleness

Surmounted; in her gentle hand
She grasped a mirror, and a grand
Quaint carven comb her tresses held,
While gloves of spotless white repelled
The sun, which fain would kiss her skin.
And lastly, she had 'tired her in
A costly coat of cloth of Ghent,
On which much labour had been spent
In broidering, while her sleeves around
With silken cords were laced and bound.
And when that she her raiment fair
Had donned, and 'tired her golden hair,
The day for her was worn and done,
Nought else had she to think upon.
A joyful time, a pleasant May
Was hers, for care she drove away
And dreamed of nothing, night and morn,
But how her body to adorn.
When thus I saw the garden gate
Unlocked by this most delicate
And winsome dame, her goodlihead
Abashed me, and I gently said
My thanks, and dared to ask her name,
And who she was, and whence she came.

With pleasant mien, in nowise high
Or haughty, made she quick reply:
"My dear companions well express
My name, who call me Idleness,
A rich and puissant woman I,
Passing the time right gleefully;
Nought else have I to think upon
Save what fair raiment I shall don,

What rich and costly jewels wear,
How deck my head, and 'tire my hair.
When this is finished then my day
Is ended, and to mirth and play
I give myself. My dearest friend
Is Mirth, and by his side I spend
Long pleasant hours. The Lord is he
Of this fair garden; every tree
From out the land of Saracens
He brought, for well the art he kens
To make his garden a delight,
And as the trees grew strong he dight
The wall around, and caused thereon
Those dreadsome paintings to be done,
Of Sorrow, Hatred, Eld, and Spleen,
Which wending hither thou hast seen.
He cometh here full oft to seek
The pleasant leafy shade, and eke
His followers join him in these bowers,
'Mid mirth and joy to spend long hours
Untouched by care. E'en now I wot
Mirth lounging in cool shade or grot
Listeth the sweet-voiced nightingale,
Merle, laverock, mavis, and wood-wale:
Here with his friends, the long day through,
Sweet solace finds he, for ne'er knew
The world a place that would suffice
Like this for loss of Paradise.
No merrier folk were ever seen
Through earth's broad borders, as I ween,
Than those whom Mirth doth hither bring
To spend bright days in revelling."

Her dearest friend is Mirth

The Dreamer enters the garden

When thus this winsome dame had sped
Her tale, which I had hearkenèd
With right good will: "Dame Idleness,"
I cried, "words fail me to express
What great delight were mine to see
Sir Mirth and all his company
Of joyous folk assembled here,
So pleasant, blithe, and frank of cheer,
Nor would I tear myself away
Therefrom throughout the livelong day,
For doubt I nought they all will be
Fulfilled of gentle courtesy."

No more I spake, but thanked kind fate,
When Idleness the garden gate
Threw open wide, and unafraid
To that sweet spot quick entry made.
Then burst on my astonished eyes
A dream—an Earthly Paradise:
And suddenly my soul seemed riven
From earth, to dwell in highest heaven;
Yet doubt I much if heaven can give
A place where I so soon would live
As this sweet garden, sacred haunt
Of birds whose soft melodious chaunt
Ravished mine ears; the nightingales
Here sang, and there the green wood-wales;
The bullfinch piped beneath, above,
I heard the crooning turtle-dove,
Near by, the sweet-voiced tiny wren,
While high in air, beyond my ken,
The skylark soared; the titmouse shrilled
The fauvette's gentle treble trilled,

The merle and mavis seemed to shake
The leaves in cadence, while each brake
With small fowl rang, as they would try
Their throats in choral rivalry.
'Twould seem as all and each of these
Sweet birds sang joyance to the breeze,
And then, their hearts disburdened, flew
To keep some loving rendezvous.
The sweet melodious harmony
That winged its way from tree to tree,
With such soft symphony did fall
As concert 'twere celestial.
For never yet hath mortal ear
Been tuned such heavenlike songs to hear,
And past all thought it seemed that earth
Could give such glorious music birth.
Then all at once it broke on me
I heard the syrens of the sea,
For they alone I trow can bring
To ears of men such carolling.
I vow that when beneath the shade
The birds such glorious music made,
My spirit and soul were like to melt
And fail with that delight I felt.
For ne'er ere this, my whole life through,
Did joy so unalloyed bedew
My every sense, and ecstasy
Ran through the very soul of me.
Bethought I then what untold debt
I owed Dame Idleness, who set
My feet in this surpassing place,
For 'twas alone through her good grace
And kindliness I entrance gained
To this fair haunt wherein Mirth reigned

The song of the birds

Sir Mirth and his company

Supreme; my best and truest friend
I'll count her till my life-days end.
Now will I set myself to tell
The further tale of what befell
In that fair spot.
What things Mirth did,
And who the friends were that he bid
To keep him company will I
Declare all faithfully, and try
To show and picture forth to you,
What happed to me, in order due.
Set out the whole in little space
Could no man, but if kindly grace
You grant me, then shall be unrolled
The tale complete, till all be told.

Within this garden, past compare,
The birds sweet voicing filled the air
With honeyed songs and roundelays,
Discoursing in a thousand ways
Their tales of tender woodland love.
I listed how some sang above
My head, perched high among the leaves,
And others 'mid the fragrant sheaves
Of blossom near the ground, and all,
With melody most musical,
Rejoiced my heart exceedingly:
Then woke a new desire in me
To look on Mirth's fair countenance
And grasp his hand; the radiance
That flooded all my soul, I felt
Would be redoubled if he dealt
Me welcoming. I now forsook
The open grassy space, and took

A shaded pathway, where my feet
Bruised mint and fennel savouring sweet;
And following close my gracious guide,
Found me ere long within a wide
Secluded lawn, a sweet resort
Where Mirth held joyously high court
In care-spurned ease for full enjoyment
Of life's glad gifts, undashed by cloyment
Or surfeit or revolt. Amazed
I stood awhile, mine eyesight dazed,
For erst or since, ne'er men I ween
So like winged angels, eyes have seen.

The song of Gladness

IV

Herein the Lover tells of Gladness:
A dame is she who, casting sadness
To the wild winds, doth nought but play
And carol through the livelong day.

E'EN as I came within the close,
A glorious burst of song uprose;
For one, whose name was Gladness, loud
And clear-voiced sang amid the crowd
Foregathered there; full well she knew
To modulate her tones with due
And gentle cadence, now to fall
And now to rise high over all.
Her note was clear as silver bell,
And, gently swaying, rose and fell
Her supple form, the while her feet
Kept measured time with perfect beat:

Dance and music

'Mid her companions ever first
Her voice was into song to burst,
For in that art divine did she
Exceed all rivals facilely.
Then through my frame I felt a throe
Of joy to see them dancing go,
As man and maid in measure trod
With twinkling feet the springing sod.
While minstrels sang, the tambourine
Kept with the flute due time I ween,
And rondelettes burst forth amain
To merry tunes of old Lorraine
So sweetly, that I doubt if e'er
Was heard such music otherwhere,
For that fair province doth excel
In heaven-born music's tuneful spell.
Then saw I cunning jugglers play,
And girls cast tambourines away
Aloft in air, then gaily trip
Beneath them, and on finger-tip
Catch them again, with skill so rare,
That all men stood a-wondering there.
Then came two damsels 'tired with taste
That Venus' self had not disgraced,
And suited well their dainty dresses
The wondrous plaits that bound their tresses:
Their kirtles thin but reached the knee,
Through which their forms showed pleasantly.
I saw the twain toward Mirth advance
With agile leap and darting glance,
Then both flew forward with a bound,
Just missed a kiss, then flung them round

As though they feared some wrong they'd done, **The salutation of Courtesy**
Then lovingly embraced anon,
And then once more did they retreat,
A-playing with their winsome feet
A thousand antic turns; so quaint
And strange they were, that I should paint
Their wonders feebly did I try
To show the supple subtlety
With which their lithe light bodies swayed;
Such tumult in my breast it made
As never dance and song I deem
Had done before in sooth or dream.

Herein the Dreamer's pen doth draw
The semblance of the dance he saw
And joined in, and relates how she,
Hight Courtesy, essays to be
His guide, and gently tells him who
Dance there, and all they say and do.

I STOOD awhile, as one entranced,
To watch how wondrously they danced,
Till tripped across the sward to me
A winsome dame, hight Courtesy.
Past power of words I found her fair,
Bewitching, bright, and debonair.
(May God preserve her life from harm)
At once with voice that seemed to charm
All fear away, she cried: Fair sir,
Wilt thou not deign thy foot to stir
In jocund dance?

Sir Mirth portrayed

Without delay
I followed where she led the way
With right good will, for strong desire
To join the throng my heart 'gan fire;
Yet scarce therewith to mingle dared
Till thus her welcome speech had bared
My mind of doubt. I then began
The glorious folk around to scan,
Their fashions, manners, style and seeming:
Now list, while forth I tell my deeming.

Erect Sir Mirth stood, straight and tall,
In all points such as one might call
A man well built; a tinge of red
His white cheek lit, no vermeil thread
His mouth, but full and round, his eyes
Steel blue and gracious, whence did rise
Sweet smiles unceasingly, his nose
Was such as Grecian Phidias chose
For great Apollo, blond his hair,
Which fell adown his shoulders bare
In silken curls, his girdlestead
Was slight, yet lithesome lustihead
Its lines betrayed, while arms and knees
Were knit like mighty Hercules.
The glorious masterpiece did he
Of some great painter look to be,
And scarce need fear comparison
For beauty with Jove's godlike son:
Where beard would be, began to spring
Down, soft as that 'neath cushat's wing.

His noble limbs were richly clad
In samite, which about it had

Figures of beauteous birds enwrought
In golden tissue: quaint past thought
The slashings were with which 'twas slit
And puffed in every part of it
For fashion's sake, and gaily decked
With jewels; nought of cost he recked.
About his shapely legs and feet
Were boots carved curiously. Oh sweet
The roses were that well bested,
For crown, his goodly golden head,
There set by gentle hands of her
Who was his love and worshipper.
And would ye wot who this might be
Whose love enthralled him? soothfastly,
'Twas Gladness who so blithely sang.
When she but seven years knew, Love flang
His net around her, and I ween
Since then Mirth's sweetheart had she been.
Then straightway did the pair enlace
Their hands, and heart to heart embrace,
Joining in gladsome dance. Most fair
Did Gladness look as stood they there,
Like to a rose but newly blown
Which nought of wind or storm hath known.
So tender was her flesh, that torn
'Twould be by frailest sapful thorn.
Beneath her forehead, void of frown,
Were eyebrows arched, of sunny brown,
And smiles would wreathe her eyes before
Her mouth the rippling laughter bore,
And ever and anon the bliss
Her lips invited of loving kiss;

Sir Mirth's sweetheart

The God of Love

Her nose of delicate form, and white,
As well might show in wax' despite.
O brilliant was the sun-gold hair
That crowned her head, round which she ware
A fillet fine, its wealth to hold,
O'er which a chaplet worked with gold
Rode royally; two-score and nine
Fair orfreyed chaplets 'neath mine eyne
Have passed erewhile, but none were wrought
Of silk so well as this methought.
Her outer mantle was a rich
Bright robe of silken samite which,
Seeing that Mirth well loved it, she
Arrayed her in delightedly.

VI

The Dreamer hear ye now declare
What guise the God of Love doth bear.

HARD by this winsome pair did stand
The God of Love, whose mighty hand
Dealeth to lovers weal or woe
As seemeth good to him; alow
He casteth pride, and oft-time makes
High-minded men for ladies' sakes
Right humble, and proud dames to bow
With meekness 'neath his yoke, I trow.
The God of Love is dowered with grace
So richly, both in form and face,
That scarce, I deem, of his allure
My pen dare draw the portraiture.
Love's friends had woven from his bowers,
In scorn of silk, a robe of flowers,

All worked about with amorettes,
And tied with dainty bandelets,
Bedecked with lozenges and scutcheons,
Leopards, strange outland beasts, and lions;
While blossoms of all colours were
Besprinkled o'er it, here and there.
'Twere no light task some flower to name
That was not found thereon, each came
To lend its beauty, blue perwinkle
'Twixt rose and yellow broom did twinkle,
With violets, pansies, birdseye blue,
And flowers untold of varied hue.
Sweet scented roses, red and pale,
(Round which flew many a nightingale)
Festooned Love's head, and every sort
Of bird seemed there to hold high court,
The skylark, blue-tit, merle and dove,
Sang in his ear sweet songs of love,
Fluttering around his head, and he
One of God's angels looked to be.

The weapons of Sweet-Looks

Anigh him stood Sweet-Looks, who glanced
With soft regard on those who danced:
A friend right well beloved was he
Of Cupid, and (bent readily
For use) a crook'd Turk's bow he bore
In either hand; the first one wore
Most evil aspect, made of tree
Whose fruit I trow would nowise be
Of grateful savour; gnarled and hoar
It was, and black as sun-scorched moor.
The second pliant, lithe, and white,
With quaint designs and figures dight

The five shafts of Sweet-Looks

Of dames and knights of gentle mien.
Moreover in his hands were seen
Ten arrows, five of which were fair
And beauteous; these his right hand bare,
Brilliant the plumes, the notches made
Of gold, the while like-precious blade
Each shaft-end wore; though nought of steel
Or iron knew they, hearts would feel
Their wound-stroke sorely. Save the shaft
And plumes, 'twas well-skilled goldsmiths' craft
Had wrought these weapons; they were capped
With cruel barbs, and whoso happed
Within their murderous range to fall
Would feel Love's wound and own his thrall.
Of these five shafts, I trow the best
And speediest, when it knew Love's hest,
(And fairest eke for plumage reckoned)
Had Beauty for its name; the second
Was called Simplicity; the third
Was Franchise, and another word
Bedecked it, sweetest Courtesy:
Companionship I saw to be
The fourth, which if 'twere shot from far
Would do small harm, but greatly mar
If drawn anear: the fifth and last
Fair-Seeming was, which, deftly cast,
Doth sorely maim, but yet the wound
Incurable is rarely found,
But given due time may healèd be
By means of Love's sweet surgery.
Sweet-Looks five arrows held likewise
Within his left hand, but of guise

Far different, formed of iron fell
And black as he who rules dark hell.
The first was called unlovely Pride,
And Villainy lay hard beside,
With Felony is he attaint,
Portray the one—and both you paint.
The third was Shame, of downcast air,
The fourth, her fellow, dire Despair,
The while the last one proved to be
New-thought or Infidelity.
These shafts, whose qualities I name,
A close relationship may claim,
And all moreover plainly show
Near kin with that most hideous bow,
All knotted, gnarled, deformed and rough,
Though soothly seemed it good enough
To launch such villain shafts, which strive
In all things 'gainst the fair-made five
Whereof I've told: O scarce will you
Their power and force give credence to;
But yet the simple truth shall be
Hereafter plainly told by me;
And have a care lest you forget
The drift and sense of what is set
Before your eyes by this plain tale,
For you shall find no small avail
Therein ere yet the end is sped—
Fair wit with wisdom closely wed.

Love's counter-shafts

Beauty.

Now turn I to my tale amain:
And will of all Love's frolic train

A portrayal of Beauty

Declare at full the countenances,
Their joyous sports and graceful dances.
Perceived I that the God of Love
One noble lady sought above
All others gathered there; she hight
Dame Beauty, as that arrow bright
Which bore her name was she, and dowed
With gentle grace, which freely showed
In all her movements. As the moon
Makes candles of the stars, her noon
Paled all her fellows: as the dew
Her flesh was tender, and ne'er new
And blushing bride more simple seemed;
Where'er her skin peeped forth it gleamed
As white as fleur-de-lis; her brow
Was clear and fair as virgin snow,
The while her form was tall and slight.
No need had she her face to dight
With paint or other vain disguise,
As women somewhiles use; despise
And scorn might she such false allure,
In natures decking bright and pure.
So plenteous grew her golden hair,
That near her heels it reached I swear.
Her nose, her mouth, her beaming eyes,
Were such that when their beauties rise
(God help me) in my thought they seem
To wake once more that glorious dream.
Forsooth, so sweet she was and fair,
With perfect rounded limbs, that ne'er
Throughout the world's broad space, I ween,
Aught could surpass her matchless sheen.

VII

Here tells the Dreamer of Richesse,
Who counteth her of high noblesse,
But so consumed is she with pride,
That all poor men she casts aside,
And therefore less beloved by far
Than those who sweet and courteous are.

The qualities of Dame Richesse

DAME Richesse stood by Beauty's side,
Haughty of mien, and puffed with pride,
Rude arrogance and self-esteem.
Right rash and hardy should I deem
The man who hindrance dared to throw
Across her path, for well doth know
Richesse her foes to spoil and spill,
But honours those who do her will.
Neither to-day nor yesterday
'Twas learned that rich folk have their way,
And oftentimes misuse their power
To raise men up in one short hour
To great estate, or make them fall
To misery dire. Both great and small
To Dame Richesse full deference give,
For 'neath her rule men love to live,
And serving her will gladly die,
Proud to have worn her livery;
Yet not because they hold her dear,
And love her, but for craven fear.
Mockers and flatterers much abound
Within her courts, and there are found
Traitors and envious folk who try
To do those good men injury

The robe of Dame Richesse

Whose worth deserveth laud and praise.
Chiefest among their devious ways
Is this—with false oiled tongue to speak
'Fore men on whom they long to wreak
Their vengeance, but their poisonous clacks
Sound loudly when they turn their backs,
For noblest men would they abase,
To miscreants giving power and place.
Disloyal, they all loyalty
Treat with contempt and scorn, but vie
In persecuting good men, while
They laud the vilest of the vile,
And many an upright man one sees
Forth driven from courts by perfidies.
But may these envious flatterers be
By God brought down to misery.
Alas! that e'er such folk were born!
Their ways and works all good men scorn.

A purple robe did Richesse wear,
Than which, 'fore heaven and earth I swear,
Fearless to be convict of lie,
None e'er was wrought more daintily;
The purple broidered with great store
Of orfreys, rich with golden ore.
With forms of mighty men it shone
Renowned in ages past and gone,
Great dukes and kings, and such as be
Writ large in ancient history.
The golden band around her neck
Did many an orlèd shield bedeck,
Silver, on ruddy gold annealed,
Illumined each bright quartered shield;

The whole enwrought most craftily,
And great of price I warrant ye.
Then o'er her robe, and round each hem
Shone many a lustrous priceless gem,
Which flashed and glittered in the light
As heaven's bright stars on frost-clear night.

The gems worn by Dame Richesse

Richesse around her girdlestead
Was gloriouswise encincturèd
Above her purple robe. A stone
Of magic power and virtue shone
Amidst thereof: the wight who bore
This stone need poisons fear no more,
For 'gainst all venoms which to man
Bear danger, 'twas a talisman,
And to a knight of gentle birth
Above Rome's treasures was its worth.
The mordant, of a gem was made
That aching of the teeth allayed,
And whoso looked on it ere yet
He brake his morning's fast, should get
Long years of faultless sight. Of gold
Without alloy was made the hold
That clasped it, while each single tooth
Was worth a bezant's weight forsooth.
No silk or satin plaits she ware
To hold her wealth of yellow hair,
But golden circlets, thrice refined,
The glory of her head confined.
A subtle pen that scribe would own
Who could at full describe each stone
And gem unvalued, richly set
Within her gorgeous coronet,

The minion of Dame Richesse

For not a man on earth can guess
Their untold worth and pricelessness.
Sky-shaming sapphires, rubies red
As pigeon's blood but newly shed,
Garnets and emeralds weighed not less
Than ounces ten; but profitless
It were that I should strive to paint
The great carbuncle's glory, faint
And poor were any words of mine
To warrant how 'tis wont to shine
So clearly that on murkiest night,
Devoid of lamp, the wearer might
(So strongly shoots its brilliant ray)
For many a league pursue his way.

Such brightness sprang from forth this stone
That every part of Richesse shone
With glory, body, feet and face,
As though bright stars belit the place.

Fast by the hand, Dame Richesse led
A youth of fairest goodlihead;
Her gallant past all doubt was he,
And gladly sought her company.
He loved fine mansions, castles fair,
And jewels rich, and vestments rare,
Grand stables, horses past all price,
And sooner were he charged with vice
Of theft or murder, than 'twere said
His stables harboured crock or jade.
The friendship constantly he sought
Of Dame Richesse, for all his thought
Was how to scatter wealth, and she
Supplied his hands ungrudgingly.

Right recklessly he made display
Of gorgeous splendour day by day,
While she with free hand gave, as though
Gold bezants did her barns o'erflow.

Largesse ruleth all

Largesse.

Then next to noble Richesse came
Largesse, a free and generous dame,
No man on earth I trow doth live,
Loves more to grasp than she to give
Honour and wealth; to Alexander
Is she akin, and loves to squander
Her gifts if but for giving's sake,
Crying to all who pass: Come, take!
Poor pinching Avarice loves not more
To heap and gather needless store,
Than Largesse doth to scatter wide
Her good, and still doth God provide
Her plenteous wise, for while 'tis spent
Thus freely, still doth it augment.

Largesse aye keepeth 'neath her rule
Alike the sage and drivelling fool,
All bow to her and fain confess
Her for their friend and patroness.
And if perchance she suffereth hate
Of any wight, 'tis dissipate,
Quick as hoar-frost, by some great gift,
And therefore rich and poor uplift
Loud voice alike in Largesse' praise.

A fool is that great lord whose ways
Are beggarlike! No other vice
Degrades great men like avarice.

The knight of Dame Largesse

The man of close, hard-griping hand
Ne'er wins high seigniory or land,
For few finds he of loving friends
To spread his fame or work his ends.
The man who fain would draw around
Him friends, should let his hand abound
In gifts free-given—for thus he earns
Great love—and as the needle turns
Towards the pole, e'en so shall he
By gifts draw friends abundantly.

A purple garment, rich and cool,
Enwoven in the Mawmet school
Of Saracens did Largesse wear;
Left open 'twas, with careless care,
About the neck, for latterly
Unto a dame hard by her she
Had lent the mordant; passing well
I liked the fashion, made to tell
The snowy whiteness of her throat,
Which through thin gauze rapt eyes might note.

For knight, Dame Largesse did engage
A youth who claimed the lineage
Of Arthur, King of England; he
Bore Valour's banner gloriously,
And eke the gonfanon; right great
And noble deeds by him relate
Minstrels, in courts of Counts and Kings,
And hitherward he a trophy brings
Fresh from a tourney which he lays
Before his mistress's feet, whose praise
Through many a joust hath he maintained
In shattering helm and shield, and gained

Proud victory over many a knight
By virtue's power and strong-armed might.

The fairness of Franchise

Franchise.

Franchise stood next, on Largesse' right,
Of skin as delicate, pure, and white
As hawthorn bloom or June-tide rose,
Not of the Orleans twist her nose,
But well formed, long and straight; her brow
Bore eyebrows arched like Cupid's bow,
O'er laughing eyes; her long locks blond,
Her mien as simple, sweet and fond
As turtle-dove; her tender heart
Rejoiced in joy, or bore its part
With others' sadness, and was fain
To keep her lips when speech woke pain.
So piteous was she and so true,
She ne'er would suffer one to rue
His life for love of her, nay more,
Such sympathy towards all she bore,
That when she saw some man who sighed
For her, she'd hasten to his side,
To save his soul from misery dire.
Of finest woof was her attire,
And warrant I that never lass
Betwixt this place and far Arras
Ware daintier raiment. It was sewed
And broidered in such skilful mode,
That doubt I much could seam or point
Have been more skilfully adjoint.
Grateful and charming to the eye,
Was Franchise' modest bravery;

The praise of Courtesy

For nothing ever suits so well
As simple frock for demoiselle,
And that in which Franchise was dight,
Linen of pure and spotless white,
By dyes unstained, did well express
The maiden's inward loveliness.

Beside Franchise a stripling stood,
Of noble port and lustihood,
But how he named him knew I not,
Yet one so fair of mien I wot,
And gaily clad as bird in spring,
Were well the son of Windsor's king.

VIII

Herein the author's pen essays
To show why Courtesy the praise
Deserves of all men; love she spreads
Around her wheresoe'er she treads.

AND next stood gracious Courtesy,
Who ne'er midst men can fail to be
Welcome: strangers to her are pride
And folly. Straightway to her side
She summoned me with kindly call
To join the gladsome dance withal.
Frank-eyed she was, and no deal shy
Or timid, but most graciously
Spake forth to me in friendly wise,
With pleasant words and quaint replies,
Wherein one found no poison lurk.
Her form was nature's perfect work,
And e'en as stars like candles mean
Beside the moon's bright rays are seen,

So her companions showed beside
Her dazzling beauty's winsome pride.
Than this fair damsel who shall find
A nobler face or gentler mind,
Or one who would more worship gain
Should she as Queen or Empress reign?

Idleness claims the Dreamer

Beside her stood a valiant knight,
Who knew to choose his words aright
Whene'er he spake; well loved seemed he
Of her who bare him company.
Well skilled in feats of arms he was, his grace
Showed forth alike in form and face.

Then, Idleness came near to me,
Whose hand I took most willingly
To join the dance. Erewhile I've said
How fraught with grace and goodlihead
She was, and she 'twas raised the pin
That kept the wicket, and within
The close through her I entrance gained,
My trembling heart set free and fained.

IX

And lastly here is told of Youth,
Reckless, naïve, and wild forsooth.

THE last that lingers in my mind
Is Youth, to all but pleasure blind.
No more than twelve short years, I ween,
This innocent maiden yet had seen
Of good or ill, and looked to be
Still in her first simplicity.

The joyance of Youth

Of nought she dreamed from day to day
But gladness, joy, and gleesome play,
And only mirth and laughter sought,
Without one care or afterthought.
A lover had she, like in age
To her sweet self, and no more sage
Than she. The simple pair would kiss
From time to time, and nought amiss
They deemed it all the dance should see
When they embraced as lovingly
As cooing turtle-doves. The boy,
E'en as the girl, was nowise coy,
But was in artlessness for her
A fitting mate I dare aver.

Thus merrily this jovial throng
Disported them with dance and song,
And many another knight and dame,
Of gracious mien and goodly fame,
Soon joined them to the light-heart crew,
While through the air gay laughter flew.

X

The God of Love with care doth watch
The Lover's steps, in hope to catch
Him unawares, and so the five
Bright arrows through his heart to drive.

WHEN dance and dancers I had seen
To heart's content, across the green
I turned to wander at mine ease
Beneath the burgeoning mulberry trees,

Laurels, lithe hazels, and dark pines,
Throughout the garden's far confines.
And when the swaying dance was ended,
And, arms entwined, the partners wended
To seek soft couches 'neath the shade
That long lawn-kissing branches made,
Lord God! such jolly lives they led
As all must envy, by my head,
Who are not fools; for nought I ween
Is better than with one dear queen
To pass soft hours in tender love—
What more gives paradise above?

The Dreamer tracked by Love

But straightway from the dance I went,
And o'er the lawn my footsteps bent
As fancy led, when suddenly
The God of Love, who followed me,
Signed to Sweet-Looks to bring his bow,
And shafts that 'longed thereto, and lo!
Without a word he claimed from him
The weapon fair, choosing the trim
And beauteous arrows from the ten
He held to serve his use, and then
Picked out the mighty God from thence
One of swift flight and great potence,
And, bow in hand, pursued me straight
Unseen; O God! how nearly fate
O'ertook me then.
But unaware
Of Love's intent I wandered where
Green alleys led, the while that he,
Whereso I sped, still followed me.

The trees of the garden

No thought had I to stay or rest,
But roved north, south, and east and west,
Desiring leisurely to view
The close, and all that 'longed thereto.
I noted that from side to side
The garden was nigh broad as wide,
And every angle duly squared.
The careful planter had not spared
To set of every kind of tree
That beareth fruit some two or three,
Or more perchance, except some few
Of evil sort. Among them grew
Pomegranates filled with seeds and thick
Of skin, most wholesome for the sick;
Strange nut trees, which in season bore
Rich fragrant nutmegs, good for store,
And nowise cursed with nauseous taste,
But savouring well. Near by were placed
Almonds and gillyflower cloves,
Brought hither from hot Ind's far groves,
Dates, figs, and liquorice which deals
Contentment while misease it heals,
And wholesome aniseed's sweet spice,
And much-prized grains of paradise,
Nor must rare cinnamon be forgot,
Nor zedoary, which I wot
At end of great repasts men eat
In hope 'twill bring digestion meet.
Moreover in this garden rare
Grew many a tree familiar,
As cherry, pear and knotted quince,
'Neath which a tender tooth will wince,

Brown medlars, plums both black and white, **The fruits**
Apples and chestnuts, peaches bright;
Sorb-apples, barberries, fruit of lote
And many more of lesser note.
And all around this pleasant close
Holly, and laurel, and holm arose
With yew and hornbeam, fit I trow
For flitting shaft, and speeding bow;
The cypress sad, and pines that sigh
To soft south breezes mournfully,
Beech, loved of squirrels, olive dark,
And graceful birch with silvery bark;
The shimmering aspen, maple tall,
And lofty ash that topped the wall,
The limber hazel, oak trees hoar,
But wherefore should I tell of more?
For wearied would your heart be ere
I numbered half that flourished there.
But this I say, such skilful art
Had planned the trees that each apart
Six fathoms stood, yet like a net
The interlacing branches met,
Through which no scorching rays could pass
To sear the sward, and thus the grass
Kept ever tender, fresh and green,
Beneath their cool and friendly screen.

Roebuck and deer strayed up and down
The mead, and troops of squirrels brown
The tree-boles scoured, while conies grey
Shot merrily in jocund play

Around their burrows on the fresh
And fragrant greensward, void of mesh.

The garden's well-springs

Within the glades sprang fountains clear:
No frog or newt e'er came anear
Their waters, but 'neath cooling shade
They gently sourded. Mirth had made
Therefrom small channelled brooks to fling
Their waves with pleasant murmuring
In tiny tides. Bright green and lush,
Around these sparkling streams, did push
The sweetest grass. There might one lie
Beside one's love, luxuriously
As though 'twere bed of down. The earth,
Made pregnant by the streams, gave birth
To thymy herbage and gay flowers,
And when drear winter frowns and lowers
In spots less genial, ever here
Things bud and burgeon through the year.
The violet, sweet of scent and hue,
The periwinkle's star of blue,
The golden kingcups burnished bright,
Mingled with pink-rimmed daisies white,
And varied flowers, blue, gold, and red,
The alleys, lawns and groves o'erspread,
As they by Nature's craft had been
Enamelled deftly on the green,
And all around where'er I went
Fresh blooms cast forth odorous scent.
Small need there is to fabulate
More fully of the fair estate
Of this most comely garden, lest
It wear your patience; nought expressed

Could all the glorious beauty be
Of this most wondrous place by me,
And therefore stay from words' increase
Thereon, and henceforth hold my peace.

The fount of Narcissus

Yet willing to explore each nook
And secret spot, my way I took
Hither and thither, left and right.

The God of Love still kept in sight
My every movement, even as he
Who tracks a quarry carefully
Seeks for the moment when his prey
Doth unawares his life betray.

So, wandering o'er this charmèd ground,
I lastly came to where I found
A fountain 'neath a glorious pine.
Ne'er since great Charles of Pepin's line
Was born, hath mortal eye e'er seen,
In any garden as I ween,
A pine so tall, straight-grown, and fair.
And in a stone of marble there,
Had Nature's hand most deftly made
A fountain 'neath that pine tree's shade.
And gazing on the side of it,
Beheld I small clear letters writ,
Which said: "Here fair Narcissus lay
And died, in tears dissolved away."

XI

The author here of fair Narcisse
Doth tell the tale, who was, ywis,
Drawn on to love his proper shade,
Seen in a well, and thereby made
His life so wretched, that at last
He pined and wasted till he passed
To nothingness. His soul doth sit
Beside the fount and dream of it.

Of Narcissus and Echo

NARCISSUS hight a youth beset
By Love, and snared within his net;
Who thereby so great sufferance felt
As lastly caused his soul to melt
In tears, and render up the ghost:
For him fair Echo's soul was lost
In love that reason's voice defied,
And she, o'ercome with passion, cried:
"O shouldest thou disdain to give
To me thy love, I scorn to live."
Then he, (self-loving fool, and vain
Of heart,) regarded nought her pain,
But scoffed at every fond caress,
And spurned her proffered tenderness;
Until, despairing, day by day
She wasted and pined and waned away
For love of him: but as in air
Her spirit passed, she made her prayer
To God, that this Narcissus' hard
Unpitying heart might e'en be scarred,
Like hers, with love unsatisfied,
To recompense his cruel pride,

And thus at last he too might prove
The pangs of unrequited love.
The God, in pity, bowed his ear
To list his sweet petitioner,
And caused Narcissus, tired and worn
With hunting, through a summer's morn,
O'er valley, lawn, and mountain's crown,
Hither to come and cast him down,
Consumed by thirst, beside the cool
And crystal waters of the pool
To which the spreading pine tree gave
Refreshing shade, then o'er its wave
He bent him, driven by thirst, to drink
The limpid wave that lapped its brink.

Echo is avenged

XII

This telleth how Narcissus sighed
His soul away in tearful tide
Through fond self-love; yet died he not,
But lives within this fount, I wot.

WHEN stooped he low to slake his drouth
And saw his forehead, nose, and mouth,
He started back in wonderment,
For through his heart the vision sent
A thrill, to see himself so fair,
Matchless in form, of beauty rare.
Then Love knew well his way to take
Narcissus in his toils, and make
Him suffer such-like cruel woe
As he had dealt to fair Echo.

A warning to fair women

Beside the crystal fount he lay,
Gazing enrapt, the live-long day,
Enamoured of the shadow he
Saw in the fount so perfectly,
Until he sighed away his breath;
And lastly found thereby sweet death.
Now hearken while the tale I tell,
How on his heart Love's vengeance fell.
When plain it was that he nowise
Could gain that thing which in his eyes
Alone seemed good, and when he knew
How hopeless all his longing grew
Of sweet fulfilment, and that ne'er
Could he in that he longed for share
And have his joyance, then he lost
In wrath his reason, and the frost
Of death came o'er him. Thus was heard
The prayer of that sweet nymph whose word
Of love he rudely scorned. O fair
And gentle ladies, be ye ware
By this example that your ears
Ye shut not hardily, nor tears
Despise of those who seek your love,
Lest ye with vain remorse should prove
How God doth punish those who leave
Kind swains to die, or vainly grieve.

Assured the fair inscription writ
Above the fountain pointed it
Most plainly for the self-same one
Whereby Narcisse had been foredone,
My impulse was towards speedy flight,
Without one glance within the bright

But treacherous wave; the very thought
Of sad Narcissus' dooming brought
Fear to my heart. But soon I said:
"Whereof, O man, art thou afraid?
'Twere madness didst thou not essay
This fount wherein sweet sunbeams play."
Forthwith then on my knees I sank,
Pressing the verdant mossy bank
With wish more closely to behold
The flood, and pebbles note (than gold
More bright), that freely paved the floor
Of that fair fount.

The beauty of the fountain

Without the door
Of paradise the blest, I ween
No sight more beauteous may be seen
Than this bright well. The gushing source
Springs ever fresh and sweet. Its course
It takes through runnels twain, full deep,
And broadly trenched; it knows no sleep
By day or night, for ne'er 'tis dried
By wasting drought of summer tide,
Nor hath stern winter's iron hand
The power to make its waters stand
Immovable, but out the ground
Its babble calls, the whole year round,
Close, tender herbage, which doth push
Unceasingly, strong, thick and lush.
Fast in the fountain's pavement shone
Two sparkling spheres of crystal stone,
Whereon my gaze with wonder fell:
And, when the tale thereof I tell,
Your ears will tingle as I trow,
And pleasure unto marvel grow.

Beware of the fate of Narcissus

When that the sun, which searcheth all
The things that live on earth, lets fall
His rays within this fount we see
An hundred colours gorgeously
Shine forth within the water bright,
Vermilion, azure, silvery white,
And richest gold. Such virtuous power
These crystals have that every flower
And tree within this pleasaunce seen,
Reflection finds in their sweet sheen;
How this doth hap most clearly I
Will by example testify.
E'en as a mirror casteth back
Each thing that fronts it, nor doth lack
In working thus to give amain
The form and colour once again,
So every crystal facet here
Reflects each detail sharp and clear
Of all that in this garden lies:
For whosoever casts his eyes
Thereon, one-half the garden sees,
And if to turn, his fancy please,
The other half is then revealed.
Nor are the smallest objects sealed
Or darkly hid, but all appear
Pourtrayed within those crystals clear.

Mirrored within this perilous place,
Narcissus loved too well his face
And lustrous eyes, with foolish pride,
Thence came his fall, and thence he died.
Alas! for him who doth admire
Himself herein—for love's desire

Will seize his heart and nought can heal
His hopeless woe, nor aught anneal.
This mirror valiant men hath cost
Dear life; though fairly might they boast
Themselves for prudent, wise, and great,
They here alas! have found their fate.
Hence passion springs in man anew
And to his life gives fresh purview,
No measure, sense, or mode knows he,
Love, love, alone, hath mastery
Good counsel to the winds is cast,
For Cupid, Venus' son, hath passed
Around the fount to sow the grain
Whereof all men are madly fain,
The seed of Love to wit, and set
His springes there, and many a net
For damsels fair, and gallants eke:—
Such birds alone doth Cupid seek.

Cupid's toils

By reason of the seed there sown,
This Fountain is to all men known
As that of Love: thereof is told
The tale full oft in many an old
Romance and song, but ne'er before
Hath any man so fully or
So truly set all forth as now
'Tis writ within this book I trow.

Beside the fount awhile I stayed,
Admiring how the crystals made
Mirrors for all the lovesome things
That filled the garden. Memory brings

The Rose-bush

Before me that too long I let
Their charms engross my mind. Ah! yet
I feel these mirrors 'twas deceived
My soul, and could I have believed
What sorrow to their sight was wed,
Then had I turned my steps and fled,
As flees a man the plague. Ah me!
I fell—like others—woefully.
O'er all things mirrored there I chose
A rose bush, charged with many a rose,
Encinctured by a thick grown hedge,
And doubt ye not that though in pledge
Paris and Pavia held I both,
Mine heart in no degree were loth
To render up the twain so I
Might gaze thereon unceasingly.
Soon as I felt this passion seize
My heart, which oft hath caused misease
To wisest men, my longing drew
Me towards the rose-bush and then flew
Through all my soul its savour sweet,
Which set my heart and pulse abeat
Like fire. And were it not for fear
That I the scot might pay too dear,
I surely should have dared to seize
A rosebud, seen nought else could please
My senses equally, but dread
Restrained my hand lest, angerèd
Thereat, the guardian of the spot
Might thrust me thence straightway, God wot!

Aheap were roses! none I ween
Elsewhere 'neath Heaven's blue dome hath seen

Such rich profusion; some as yet
Mere buds, which therefore ne'er had met
Rude Boreas' kiss, while others were
Half opened, and such beauty rare
Displayed as no man would despise
Who once thereon had cast his eyes,
For roses which are broadly blown
Ere long begin to cast adown
Their petals, while the tender new
Fresh buds, as yet untouched by dew,
Will keep their beauty while the sun
His race through three full days doth run.
What ardent longing in my breast
These buds inspired! Whoso possessed
The power to pluck but one, right fain
Must be such glorious prize to gain,
And might I but secure a crown
Thereof, I would forego renown
And fortune fair. Amongst them all,
My rapturous eyes on one did fall,
Whose perfect loveliness outvied
All those beside it. I espied
With joy its lovely petals, which
Kind Nature's hand had dyed with rich
Deep crimson hue. Its perfect leaves
Were formed of two quadruple sheaves,
Which side by side stood firm and fair,
With stalk strong grown enough to bear
The full-grown bloom which did not bend
Or languish, but most sweetly spend
Its fragrance on the air around,
And wrapt my senses in profound

One surpassing Rose-bud

Love speeds a shaft

Yet soft delight. Whene'er I smelt
Its odour, strong desire I felt
Possess me wholly that I might
Snatch for mine own that dear delight.
But thorns and thistles grew so thick
Around the rose-bush, prone to prick
And wound the profanous hand that dared
Approach and grasp it, that I spared
To risk the rash attempt, afraid
My love might be with wounds apaid.

XIII

Herein the Dreamer telleth how
He felt the shaft of Cupid's bow,
E'en as he sought his hand to close
Around the stem, and snatch the rose,
Whose fragrance through his soul had sent
Such madness and bewilderment.
But this, his fondest hope, denied
The God of Love, who him espied.

THE God of Love, whose bow was bent
With purpose fell, where'er I went
Pursued my steps, and took his stand
Beneath a fig-tree, close at hand
To where, with arm upraised, I sought
To pluck the Rose whose beauty brought
Me thither; then he took a shaft
And nocking it, with bowman's craft,
Drew the string taut against his ear
With mighty arm, for well that gear

He knows to handle; straightway flew
The shaft therefrom, which right well knew
Its deadly billet; through my heart
Quick pierced the golden-headed dart,
And on my forehead ice-cold sweat
Burst forth, and ne'er can I forget
How 'neath my fur-trimmed doublet spread
Chill shuddering as my life were sped.
Pierced by the fatal shaft I fell
Supine to earth; ah! woe to tell
How sudden faintness seemed to seize
My heart, the while I felt my knees
Give way, and when from out the swoon
I woke, felt feeble as the moon
Looketh in glare of day. I thought
To see blood flow, but when I sought
The wounded spot 'twas clear and dry.
Thereto both hands did I apply,
And strove, 'mid sighs and groans, to draw
The shaft from out the cruel flaw:
But, misery me, although the bole
I drew from out the fatal hole,
The iron barb, which Beauty hight,
Remained therein, fast-fixed, and tight
Past power to move it, yet no gout
Of crimson life-blood welled thereout.

The Dreamer pierced by Beauty

Ah! then what anguish and distress,
What grief twice told, what heaviness,
I suffered: reft of speech I stood
Distrustful where or how I could
Some leech discover, or what herb
To seek that might or cure or curb
My grievous hurt.

The shaft hight Simpleness

The Rosebud still
My heart desired: that seemed to fill
My being only; and the gain
Of that dear treasure all my pain
Had eased straightway, and given to me
New life, from grief and sorrow free.
For even to see it and inhale
Its fragrance made the bitter bale
Of life seem lighter, and though death
Drew near, I strove to catch its breath.
But even then beheld that Love
Another arrow raised above
My trembling body.
Simpleness
This second shaft was called, nor less
Of might it hath than Beauty; oft
Have men and maidens felt its soft
But potent stroke. All suddenly
The God, without once warning me,
This golden arrow nocked and sped,
With mighty twang, against my head
Its cruel barb, which through the eye
Pierced to my soul; and verily
I fear no man of woman born
Can e'er from out my breast that thorn
Pull forth, for though one might release
The shaft, yet must the barb unpeace
For ever give to me, and lo!
Therewith desire began to grow
Fiercer within me than before
To win the rosebud; more and more
Increased it as the more I felt
Love's second shaft, till seemed to melt

My inmost soul. Oh sweeter far
That rose to me, than violets are
When spring awakes; it drew me on,
Though wiser 'twere if I had gone
Swiftfooted thence in hasty flight;
But oft it haps that folly's might
Prevails o'er reason, and I bent
My steps towards the rose whose scent
Subdued my will.
A careful watch
This while the archer kept to snatch
Fair field against me as I strove
To reach the fragrant flower, whose love
Entranced my soul.
Now thirdly flew
The shaft hight Courtesy, which through
My heart pierced once again. Adown
I fell at once in deadly swoon,
Stretched out beneath the sombre shade
An olive tree's broad branches made.
The wound this time was wide and deep,
And when I woke from swooning sleep,
And strove with all my strength and craft
To pluck the weapon forth, the haft,
Alas! was all therefrom I gained,
Fast fixed the jagged barb remained.
Then sitting on the sward upright,
My painful anguish as I might
Brooking, I saw that woe must be
My lot, for this last wound to me
Brought new desire to gain the rose.
And yet again the archer chose

The shaft hight Courtesy

The shaft hight Generosity

Another bolt of beauty rare,
Gold wrought and winged with plumage fair:
Ah! well might I then fear my fate,
For scalded man doth water hate,
Though but lukewarm or cold it be.
Franchise or Generosity
This shaft was named; yet nought dismayed
Would be though arrows round me played,
And swords and stones were showered pell-mell,
One word alone my tongue could spell:
"Give me my rose."
Almighty Love,
Whose influence reigneth far above
All else, to me such courage gave
As dared his worst assault to brave.
Wounded and weak I gained my feet
And staggered on, prepared to meet
The archer, towards that rose-grown brake,
But found strong spines and thistles make
A barrier none could pass. Ah! vain
All efforts proved the prize to gain.
Yet near the hedge I stood, and might
Freely enjoy the gladsome sight
Of those sweet roses hedged by thorns,
Nought recking or of pains or scorns
If only I might snuff the air
With fragrance laden, and the fair
Sweet rosebuds gaze on, free from let
Or hindrance.
Then did I forget
All pain and suffering, lost in joy
That nought could 'minish, nought destroy;

So long as I might rest anear
The rose, o'erpast was all my fear,
Healed were my wounds, what more could I
Desire, than thus to live and die?

Company and Fair-Seeming

Some while remained I resting there,
When came the God of Love, (whose care
Alonely seemed my heart to rack)
As though his mind was to attack
Me once again. With fell intent,
His bright and beauteous bow he bent,
Driving an arrow 'neath my breast,
Which found my heart—its destined quest.
This arrow's name was Company,
The which is known 'fore all to be
Potent in curing maid or dame
Of foolish coyness, pride, or shame.
It suddenly within me wrought
Renewed distress, and o'er me brought
Three swoons, and when from them I woke,
More barely my forlornness broke
Upon me, and all hope had fled
Of cure or bettering. Then I said:
More welcome death were, than to lead
A life so vile, where troubles breed
New troubles still, for Cupid now
Hath will to make of me, I trow,
A martyr; fain were I to flit
Me hence; but how to compass it?
Meanwhile the God against me aimed
Another arrow, which was named
Fair-Seeming. Dangerous it is,
Yet he who feels its force, ywis,

Love's balsam

Blesseth the pain it brings. Its point
Is keen and pierces thew and joint
Like steel-wrought razor. But the head
With unguent is by Cupid spread
To dull the pain, for wills he not
The death of those whom he hath got
Within his toils, but betterment
Delights to give them; oft is sent
To all his lieges fragrant balm,
Wrought by his hands, their griefs to calm.
Lovers in him great comfort find;
Sores doth he heal and woundings bind.
This arrow Love against me drew,
Tearing my heart, but like a dew
Of sweet effect this unguent spread
Through all my frame, from heel to head,
My senses cleared, and gave me back
That strength whereof my limbs had lack.
And through that precious balsam death
Was cheated—Love renewed my breath.

Enough of strength I had to draw
The arrow forth, but like a claw
The barb held fast, so all the five
Fair shafts did Cupid thus contrive
To lodge within my frame, which ne'er
Can force remove or time outwear.
And though the ointment helped me much,
The pains I still endured were such,
That of my countenance the hue
Was altered, and right well I knew
That this last shaft both marred and made,
For anguish tipped its pointed blade;

The while the unguent, soft and suave,
To all my wounds sweet comfort gave.
At once it hurt and yet it healed,
Awaked new pains, yet old annealed.

Love claims his victim

XIV

Herein is told how Love amain
The Dreamer claims his prisoner—fain
Is he to yield him at command,
As liegeman 'neath his master-hand.

WITH bounding step the God of Love
Towards me ran, and stood above
My prostrate form, then gaily cried:
"Vassal! 'twere vain that thou denied
Thyself my prisoner, nought to fear
Hast thou, amend thy mournful cheer.
The readier thou to do my will,
The quicker shall I be to fill
Thy heart with joyance. Mad wert thou
To fear him whom thou ought'st to know
For kindly friend; 'twere thine to seek
From him benevolence; all too weak
Art thou for contest. Learn of me
That pride and foolish vanity
Can serve thee nought. Thy will submit
To mine and thou shalt joy in it."

I answered: "Sire, to you I give
Me wholly while 'tis mine to live:
'Fore God! no will have I to make
Rebellion 'gainst you; freely take

The Dreamer becomes Love's liege

My life away. Whatso you deem
Most fitting, e'en though good it seem
To you to prison me or slay,
Speak but the word, and I obey.
My life is yours to waste or save,
I render me your bounden slave.

'Tis you alone have power to give
Or joy or penance while I live.
If your strong hand, which hath but late
Betrayed my soul to hardest fate,
Refuseth now its woes to cure,
Or prisons me,—O be you sure
I shall not murmur nor complain,
Of your decree my heart is fain.
For if with yours my heart is whole,
I nought need reck of shame or dole:
But trust you will in due time grant
That grace for which my soul doth pant."
This said, I dropped upon my knee,
With will to kiss his foot; but he,
His hand in mine, said: "Well content
Am I with thee; such words ne'er went
From out a rebel's mouth, and thou,
For that fair speech, shalt win thee now
Great honour. Homage unto me
'Tis thine to do, and grant I thee
This boon—my very mouth to kiss;
Such favour ne'er permitted is
To villains, churls, or such as be
Mere striplings; 'tis a warranty
Of Love's sweet mercy, and alone
Permitted those whose hearts are known

For courteous, honest, leal and true;
Ready and ripe for service due.
My bondage weighty is, but I
Reward good servants plenteously.
Thou well may'st feel elate and proud
To be Love's liegeman, and allowed
His livery from this day to wear.
Love doth the noble banner bear
Of Courtesy, and ever shows
Him sweetly gentle unto those
Who love him, and upon them take
His lordship. He will surely make
From out their hearts to disappear
All base desire, all servile fear.

The Dreamer becomes the Lover

XV

From Youth, which had deceived his heart,
The Lover tears himself apart,
And to the God of Love doth now
In homage, as his liegeman, bow.

WITH clasped, uplifted hands I cried:
"Behold your bondsman." Love replied
By pressing ruby lips to mine,
Oh, heaven of bliss! Oh, joy divine!
For hostage then he took me straight.

Love speaks.

"Good friend," quoth he, "full oft my fate
Hath been false homage to receive
From men who swear but to deceive.

The Lover's full surrender

Base rebels have, with many a wile,
My courtesy repaid by guile
And villain strife, but they shall know
My wrath if ever chance should throw
Them 'neath my hand; they dear shall buy
The fruits of vile hypocrisy.
But I such fond affection feel
For thee, that surely would I seal
Thy heart to mine, and hold it fast
In such firm wise that ne'er o'erpast
My vigilance shall be, but still
True faithfulness thy mind fulfil.
Deception were a grievous crime
Towards one whose heart with thine doth chime.

The Lover answers.

I answered: "Hear me, gentle sire,
And tell me why should you require
Pledge or assurance? You must know
By past experience, as I trow,
That in suchwise my heart hath been
Sore handled, that no more I ween
It hath desire to say or do
Aught else but that which pleasureth you.
This heart is yours that once was mine,
And now is bound, without repine,
To follow your command. Therein
You have a garrison will win
The victory 'gainst all comers. But
If thou hast doubt thereof, then shut
And lock it close, and guard the key."

Love.

"Now, by my head! that seems to me
Well said," quoth Love, "and I accept
Thy word; that body safe is kept
By him who under lock hath got
His captive's very heart, God wot!"

The Lover's heart is locked

XVI

This tells how Cupid skilfully
The Lover's heart with golden key
Locked in such wise, that though his breast
It entered, nought it harmed his vest.

LOVE then from forth his alm'ner drew
A little key, well-wrought anew
Of thrice refinèd gold, and said:
"This to thy heart my hand must wed;
To its safe keeping I confide
My jewels; ne'er hath it belied
My perfect trust. It doth possess
Great virtue, and in size though less
Than thy small finger, wondrous strong;
The name that to it doth belong
Is: Mistress of my jewels rare."

The Lover speaks.

Forthwith Love touched my side with care,
And so adroitly turned the key,
That scarce its path was known to me.
His utter will he thus worked out,
And when I felt 'twas done past doubt,

Love's guerison

I cried: "But one desire doth fill
My heart, which is to work thy will,
And humbly beg my homage due
Thou wilt accept for loyal and true.
My words proceed not from a heart
Wherein disloyalty hath part,
For every servant's work is vain,
Whose master treateth with disdain
The service offered, though it be
Tendered with loving loyalty."

Love speaks.

Then Love replied: "Cast fear away:
Since thou hast given thyself to-day
To me, most willingly I take
Thee to my service, and will make
Thy name renowned therein, if ye
Misdo not; yet but leisurely
Good gifts oft come, and many a pain
Must ye endure before ye gain
Relief. With faithful patience wait,
And I from out thy hard estate
Will bring thee; well to me is known
That which will work thy guerison.
If loyal and true thou dost remain,
Such sovereign balm thy heart shall fain,
As all thy wounds shall quickly heal.
Soon shall I see if thou dost deal
Me faithful service, by my head!
And if thou day and night hast sped
All those commandments faithfully
Which true hearts only have from me."

The Lover speaks.

"Great Sire," I cried, "for love of God, **Instruction claimed**
Before your foot forsakes this sod,
I pray you all your high behest
Set forth, for here I stand confessed
Your humble servitor, whose great
Desire it is, both rathe and late,
To do your will, and fain would learn
Each point, nor thence hereafter turn."

Love speaks.

Then answered Love: "Thou speakest well:
But little boots good wit to tell
To those who heed not, masters lose
Their pains unless their scholars choose
Within their memories fast to hold
The counsel wisdom's lips unfold."

The Lover speaks.

Then Cupid set himself to teach
Me, word for word, such things as reach
The very pith of his commands.
In this Romance each precept stands
Plain writ, and those who inly yearn
For love may all its mystery learn
From out its page. 'Tis ever well
To list that man who knows to tell
His story throughly. Many a new
And wondrous thing, though strange yet true,
This dream sets forth, and he who hears
The end thereof, the hopes and fears

Love's precepts

And joys of love may learn, and grow
The deep significance to know
The tale containeth. Now is hid
The truth, which all uncoverèd
Shall be when you have read throughout
The story—clear of lies or doubt.

XVII

Herein the God of Love doth teach
The Lover, and against the breach
Of laws contained in this Romance
He warns him, lest he err perchance.

"'FORE all beware of Villainy,"
Quoth Love, "and utterly deny
All knowledge of her, under pain
That all thy vows I count but vain.
Those who love Villainy I hate,
And count them excommunicate.
'Tis Villainy doth villains breed,
I hate her every thought and deed,
For fell is Villainy, and none
From her hath love or pity won.
Keep guard upon thy mouth lest leak
Therefrom such things as none should speak,
But labour to forget. Both base
And mean are slanderous tongues. The case
Of Arthur's seneschal, Sir Kay,
Remember; loved he to missay,
Fulfilled of hatred, spite and spleen.
Right well was Gawain loved, I ween,

For courtesy, while Kay was blamed
For ribald speech, and evil famed
Among all knights for boorishness.
But be thou careful to possess
Thy soul in gentleness and grace,
Kindly of heart and bright of face
Towards all men, be they great or small.
And when thou passest from the hall
Along the street, have care that thou
Salute men first with courteous bow,
Or if some one take precedence
Of thee therein, have thou the sense
To make reply without delay,
Returning his salute straightway.
Watch well thy lips, that they may be
Ne'er stained with ill-timed ribaldry.
Nor let from out thy mouth be heard
Foul talk, or unbecoming word,
For courteous knight I hold him not
Who suffereth hideous words to blot
And mar his speech.
Have special care
To honour dames as thou dost fare
Thy worldly ways, and shouldst thou hear
Calumnious speech of them, no fear
Have thou to bid men hold their peace.
Most richly shalt thou gain increase
Of glory, if to maid and dame
Thou givest ready aid; thy fame
Their tongues shall spread both far and wide.

Above all else, beware of pride,
For all men taking note may see
That 'tis but vaporous vanity,

Courtesy to women

Cast off pride

And into folly linked with sin
Man falls when once immersed therein;
For every man whose soul is stained
With pride is past all hope enchained
To actions, thoughts, and words that prove
Him alien to the House of Love,
Nor shall he know his heart to bend
In suchwise as to gain love's end.
Let him who would in love succeed,
To courteous word wed noble deed;
For he who is in mode and mien
Gentle and affable, I ween,
Around him gathereth meed and praise,
While foolish vanity betrays
A man blunt-witted.
Thou shouldst wear
Rich habit as thy purse can bear,
Well formed and fashioned; fair attire
Is oft good fuel for love's fire.
Employ no tailor who doth cut
The cloth askew to wasting, but
One who hath skill to join each sleeve
And seam with neatness. Do not leave
Thy shoes half laced, but have them new
And sprucely made, fitting to true
And perfect measure, then wilt thou
See envious whisperers wondering how
Ye put them on and take them off,
But nought need fear their gibe or scoff;
Wear gloves well made; thy purse should be
Of satin, and, tied daintily
About thy waist, wear sash. If thou
For such gear hast not wealth enow,

Then of its bravery abate
Somewhat to suit thy lesser state:
But let thy 'tiring be no worse
Than fits the coin that lines thy purse.
A wildflower chaplet mayst thou boast,
Or roses blown at Pentecost,
At modest charge. Sweet cleanliness
Use thou as part of gentleness.
Wash oft thine hands, and ne'er forget
Thy teeth to whiten, nor e'er let
Thy finger nails untended be,
But pare and keep them carefully.
Lace well thy sleeves, and comb thine hair,
But painted face and leering stare
Disdain, it suits but women or
Vile men, who get due scorn therefor.

Give heed to purity

And next remember that, above
All else, gay heart inspireth love.
A laughing mouth and merry smile
May oft a lady's heart beguile;
A sweet disease that casteth care
Is love, and many a joy doth bear;
Yet oft-times lovers undergo
Immingled hours of joy and woe;
One day consumed in sweet delight,
The next involved in sorrow's night;
For love goes ever in extremes;
Sometimes enwrapt in pleasant dreams
The lover is, then lost in tears,
A medley strange of hopes and fears.

If thou shouldst know some cheerful play
Or game to wile dull hours away,

Avoid the name of miser

My counsel is, neglect it not,
For praise and thanks may thence be got,
And every man in time and place
Should practise that which brings him grace.
If lithe and strong of limb thou art,
Fear not, but boldly act thy part,
And canst thou well a-horseback sit,
Prick high and low in pride of it;
And much with ladies 'twill advance
Thy suit, if well thou break'st a lance,
For who in arms his own doth hold,
Winneth acceptance manifold.
And if a voice strong, sweet and clear
Thou hast, and dames desire to hear
Thee sing, seek not to make excuse,
But straightway from thy memory loose
Some ditty soft; and shouldst thou know
To wake the viol's voice with bow,
Or tune the flute, or deftly dance,
Such things thy suit will much advance.
With diligence avoid the name
Of miser; obloquy and shame
Belong thereto, and lovers should,
Of all men, show a liberal mood
Of open-handed generousness,
For he who doth deny largess,
Knows not the alphabet of love.
Therefore I counsel thee above
All else no miser be, a mean
And niggard soul hath never been
My faithful servitor; the swain
Who, for his mistress' glance is fain

To risk dear life, and willingly
Would die the death if only she
Would give him one sweet smile, should ne'er,
That gained, desire his purse to spare.

Be gracious and merry withal

Now hearken, while I strive to bring
Shortly before thee everything
Thou erst hast heard; things briefest said
Are oft-times best remembered.
Whoso desireth Love to take
For lord and master, must forsake
Pride, and be wed to Courtesy.
Gracious and merry must he be,
Well known and loved for open hand.
Next, for a penance dost thou stand
Commanded that by night and day
Thy soul be given to love alway,
And ever let thy memory cling
About the source of love's sweet spring.
Desiring thou mayst perfect be
In loving, I ordain to thee,
Without appeal, that in one spot
Thy very heart is centred, not
Lukewarmly, but all doubt aside,
Void of deceit thou dost abide;
Half-hearted service count I nought,
And he who foolishly hath sought,
With heart divided, grace to gain,
Shall find his labour lost and vain:
He only hath my sovereign grace,
Whose heart is fixed in one sure place.
Moreover say I, let thy heart,
Its home once fixed, ne'er more depart

Give thy heart wholly

Therefrom, for shouldst thou let it stray,
That crime shall store an evil day.
But he who wholly doth accord
His heart in one great gift, reward
Doth merit, and each gift shall bring
The donor bounteous guerdoning.
But give it freely, singly, clear,
With joyous face and pleasant cheer,
For greatly doth the manner make
An offering welcome, none will take
A gift bestowed with grudging mien,
Above the worth of one poor bean.

When thou thy heart hast freely given,
As my fair sermoning hath striven
To teach thee, then thou next shall know
The toils and griefs those undergo,
Whose shoulders bear the lover's yoke.
Thy love adventures must thou cloke
From eyes of other men, lest they
Perceive the miseries that play
Around thy heart; thou all alone,
Content must be to make thy moan.
Then sighs, and woeful plaints, and tears,
And trembling hopes, and shivering fears,
Within thy breast wilt thou enfold;
Now parched with heat, now pinched with cold,
And now vermilion red, and now
Wan as a spectre shalt thou grow:
No fevers ever troubled man,
Nor tertian, nor quotidian,
Worse than the throes that lovers feel.
And many a time will love so deal

With thee, that thou shalt clean forego
Remembrance of thyself, nor know
What thing thou dost, but all alone
Shalt stand, as dumb as stock or stone
That hath no voice or power to move
Hand, foot, or eye—spell-bound by love.
At last, when thou long time hast been
Like man of wood or wax, I ween,
Then shalt thou sigh, and take thy breath
Long-drawn, as one might wake from death.
And wot ye well that 'tis thy fate,
As denizen of love's estate,
To suffer bravely all such woe
As Love's true soldiers needs must know.

The misery of absence

And then remembering that ye are,
From her thou lov'st, aparted far,
Thy soul shall cry: "Oh! God, my lot
Is hard, that I myself may not
Go where she is: must then my heart
Alone come near her? why apart
Should we be thus condemned to dwell?
When I desire my feet as well
Should thither bear my heart, ah me!
Therein there would small profit be;
For if my heart hath not mine eyes
For guide, their vision nought I prize.
And should they then abide here? Nay,
But haste to see without delay
That precious sanctuary, which
The thought of doth mine heart make rich.
While my desire so fast doth go,
Myself I blame for dull and slow,

Sight only satisfies

And when my heart is off my thought
So far, it seems by madness caught.
But I shall go to her, indeed,
Still following where mine heart doth lead,
Reckless of aught beside the way."
Then wilt thou forth without delay;
But travelling at too great a pace
Wilt oft-times fail to win the race,
And so perforce must turn aback,
Pensive and sad, thine outlook black,
Bemoaning that all waste hath been
Thy journey since thou hast not seen
The longed-for object. Then to great
And grievous misery of estate
Thou com'st again, with sighs and groans,
And twitchings, shiverings, and moans,
And pains acute, and minor ills,
More quick and sharp than hedgehog's quills.

Let him who doubts the truth hereof,
Ask some true lover ere he scoff.
But still thy heart will feel unrest,
With infinite desire oppressed
To see once more the face of her
Whose vision doth thy bosom stir
To madness, and if that sweet sight
Thou winnest, to thy great delight,
Past measure thou the chance wilt prize
Thereon to feast thy hungry eyes,
And through her beauty wilt thou be
Fulfilled of all felicity:
For gazing on the one sweet dame
Who sets thy being all aflame,

Will but awaken new desire,
And scorch thine heart like ardent fire.
Far, far above all else 'tis sight
That makes the flame of love burn bright.

Neglected opportunities

Of every lover 'tis the way,
The flame to follow which doth play
Fiercely upon him, and though he
Be scorched, draws closer willingly.
The fire is e'en that dearest one,
Whom all his soul is set upon
With such intense desire and yearning,
That nought he counts the pain of burning,
But ever nearer longs to draw
Towards her he counts his life and law.
Sages and fools agree in this:—
Nearer the fire the warmer 'tis.

And thus, the more thou see'st thy love,
The bitterer will each parting prove,
And when thou canst no longer stay,
But willy-nilly must away,
Through the long hours, remembrance tender,
Wilt thou unto the loved one render,
And utterly thy folly blame,
That thou so ill hast played the game
Of love, that thou hast let slip by
Some rare found opportunity
Of pouring forth thy soul, and stood
Beside her dumb as stone or wood.
And then great fear of her disdain
Shall cloud thy heart, because when fain,
Thou might'st have made her, with some word
Of tender love, no passion stirred

A lover's confusion

Thy tongue ere thou wert left alone,
Without a smile; then wilt thou own,
Not willingly hadst thou that chance
Lost, for a hundred marks of France.
Next shall thou issue forth amain,
Occasion seeking once again,
To traverse restlessly the street,
Spurred on thereto by hope to meet
Thy heart's delight, whom thou hast seen,
Erewhile, all fruitlessly I ween.
Most diligently then wouldst thou
Seek out her woning, as I trow,
Though daring not to go direct,
Lest people, Argus-eyed, suspect
Thy purpose; therefore round about
Thy feet will wander, in and out,
Finding excuse and reason fair,
Though false, why thou meanderest there,
Scheming and plotting how to hide
Thine object from the world outside.

And if by hap thou dost behold
Thy love, and straightway makest bold
To bow, and hold her in converse,
A moment later wilt thou curse
Thy folly, when thou feelest rise
Thy blood all hot, and next, from eyes
To chin wilt thou turn deadly pale,
And find thy voice to quiver and fail,
And thoughts confused within thine head,
Will tell thee thou hast blunderèd.
And when thou wouldst make fresh essay
With choicer words, thou'lt feel dismay,

Vexations and anxieties

And doubt if thou in speech art able
To show thee skilled and affable.
Of three things that thou hadst to say
Two suddenly have passed away
From thy remembrance, t'other one
Thou'lt babble forth in shamefast tone;
For never man existed yet,
Who did not thuswise words forget,
Unless a lover false of heart
Were he, who did but act a part.
Lovers untrue are void of fear,
Ready of speech, and bright of cheer;
One thing they think, yet speak another,
With view their base designs to smother:
Vile and malignant traitors they,
Using fair words to lead astray.

Whene'er this parleying is sped,
Although thou hast no word missaid,
Thou natheless wilt suspect that thou
Art lightly held, and puzzle how
Thou more can'st say, whereof shall come
Vexation sharp as martyrdom.
For every lover's life is dight
With dire vexation in despite
Of noblest aim, and he must spend
His days in strife from end to end.
In vain he hopes for sweet increase
Of joy, his lot is dire unpeace.

E'en when upon thee night doth close,
Thou shalt but find exchange of woes
And vexings; supine on thy bed,
A cloud of torment round thine head

Was this a dream?

Shall gather; little shalt thou get
Of slumber; anxious care shall fret
Thy brain, and thou shalt toss and start
Uneasily, and then athwart
Thy pillow turn, like coin upthrown,
Now cross, now pile, till thou hast grown
Weary as one whose tooth doth ache.
All this thou sufferest for the sake
Of her whose beauty to thine eyes
Is present in such glorious wise
That nought can equal it. Anon
Thou dreamest thy beloved one
Lies naked in thine arms, become
Thy wife, and decks thy joyous home.
And then shalt thou rejoice amain
In dreams of palaces in Spain,
And find delight in joys unstable,
Built up of lies and foolish fable.
But soon thy vision shall be past
And once again thy tears fall fast,
And thou shalt cry: 'Was this a dream?
Where am I? Doth all this but seem?
Alas! Whence came this vision bright?
Would God! ten times a day 'twere dight,
Ay twenty, for it steeps my soul
In joy supernal, and black dole
Drives far away. Alas! that pure
Delight should such short space endure.
Ah God! If I perchance could be
In such blest case as seemed to me
Erewhile my lot, how gladly I,
Clasped in my mistress' arms, would die.

Full oft Love's pains my soul torment, **Love's torments**
And bitter plaint, and loud lament,
I make thereof; would Love but grant
To me that sweet for whom I pant,
Ah! then all woes would count as nought,
Seeing that heaven thereby were bought.
But out alas! I ask too much,
How dare I e'en in vision clutch
At prize so high, a stern rebuff
The fool receives, when rash enough
To dream such dreams: if one soft kiss
My love would give me, Gods! what bliss
My soul were wrapt in; richly I
Were paid for all my misery.
To me the future darkly looms,
Whose rash inconsequence presumes
To lift my longing towards a place
So high I scarce dare hope for grace.
More than another's body were
One single look or glance from her.
Regard my prayer, bestow on me,
O God, the boon once more to see
My soul's desire; and then my pain
Were cured, and life revived again.

Ah! wherefore lingereth then the light
Of dawn to chase the weary night,
Wherein I nought have known of rest?
How is my ardent heart oppressed
With vain desire of her I love!
Alas! how wearisome doth prove
That couch whence sleep and dreams are fled!
I turn and writhe with drearihead,

A lover's restlessness

Fearing the night will never die,
Nor dawn relieve my misery.
Longing for light my spirit cries:
O sun, for God's sake, haste to rise
Above the hills, delay thou not,
But cast thy beams on this drear spot,
And chase, by thy resistless power,
Night, and the clouds that round me lower.'

Thus shalt thou wear the night away
Reft of repose, for well the play
Of lovers' thoughts to me is known.
And then at last, impatient grown
Of vainly courting scornful sleep,
From off thy restless couch thou'lt leap,
And set thyself in haste to don
Thy raiment, and thy shoes put on,
Although the dawning still delays
Its coming, and by secret ways
Wilt haste through storm of rain, or sleet,
To seek the house where dwells thy sweet,
Who, whilst thou wakest, in profound
And blissful dreams perchance is drowned,
Of thee unmindful: then shalt thou
Seek if the postern door allow
Some entry, but an hour or more
Must bide, content, on stony floor,
Beaten by wind and rain, to sit:
Then to the portal shalt thou flit,
And seek with diligent eye some place
Unbolted, or some window space
Left open, so that thou mayst find,
With anxious ear, if slumber bind

The inmates. But, if thou awake
Shouldst find thy love, then mayst thou take
Advantage of that moment blest
To tell her all the hard unrest
And bitter suffering undergone
By thee for her sweet love alone.
O surely thou her heart shalt touch
With pity, when she hears how much
Thou hast endured, unless more stern
Her bosom grows, as thine doth burn.

Lovers lean and pale

Now hearken thou what next shall be
Thy work for her who robbeth thee
By her sweet beauty of thy rest.

When thou against her door hast pressed
Thy lips at parting, have a care
That no man of thy step is ware
About her threshold-gate, or way
That leads thereto, ere dawns the day.
These midnight wanderings, to and fro,
And ceaseless promenades, high and low,
Cause lovers, who of late were hale
And strong, to turn as lean and pale
As hungry churls, and thou shalt see
This proved in thine identity.
No faithful lover e'er is found
Rosy and jovial, sleek and round
Of limb and visage, such like traits
Belong to lovers false, who praise
Ladies with mean and base desire
To cheat their trusting hearts; the fire

Vails to followers

Of love they know not; though they sing,
Loud-voiced, their woeful suffering,
And loss of appetite and sleep:
Natheless I see these losels keep
Fat and well liking, feeding higher
Than abbot, canon, monk, or prior.

Moreover, 'tis my strict command
Thou show'st a free and generous hand
Towards thy mistress' serving-maid;
Bestow on her a robe well made
Of fine wove stuff, and she shall spread
Thy name abroad for goodlihead.
In honour, marked by reverence, hold
All those thy lady hath enrolled
As special friends, great service they
May render thee in many a way,
And praise, perchance, bestow on thee
For gentle speech and courtesy.

Depart not from the countryside,
Or if perchance thou needs must ride
Afar, leave thou thy heart with her
Whom thou wouldst choose its cofferer.
Then haste thy steps, that thou amain
Mayst win to her sweet side again,
And let her see how wearily
Time's foot doth lag, unless thine eye
Feast on her.
Therewithal is sped
My counsel, which shall well bestead
My faithful servitor, and bring
Him and his love to harbouring."

The Lover speaks.

When Love had said his say, I cried: **Love not won lightly**
"Alas! must lovers then abide
Such cruel woe, such bitter pain,
As you recount ere yet they gain
The wished-for haven? Grievous fear
O'erwhelms my mind: what man can steer
His life through such a sea of woe
As your sworn liege must undergo?
In sighs and tears and wailings wrapped,
His health destroyed, his vigour sapped;
His nights consumed with anxious care:
Ah! God, I ask what man could wear
His life one month in such a hell,
Unless forsooth he bare a shell
Of adamant or steel?"
Quick sped
The God reply thereto, and said:

Love speaks.

"Now swear I, by my father's soul,
Who wins the prize must pay the toll,
For game hath ever sweeter taste
Which weary foot hath hotly chased;
And likewise good seems higher good
When bought by pain and wearihood.
Certes most true it is that, ne'er
Can aught with lovers' woes compare;
The man lives not whose might the sea
Can empty, nor can ever be
Love's pains set forth in tale or book;
Yet natheless, still do lovers look

Hope always present

To live, however hard their lot,
And carefully shirk death, God wot!
The wretched thrall, in dungeon dark,
Munches poor oaten bread life's spark
To keep within him, and despair
Repels, though filth and vermin wear
His wretched body: still doth hope
Of freedom give him strength to cope
With direst miseries, trusting still
By happy chance or guileful skill
To win deliverance. He likewise,
Whose soul in love's sweet bondage lies,
Hath hope at last to heal his woe,
And thence such light and comfort grow,
As give him grace to bear the smart
That love inflicts, with constant heart.

Through Hope it is that lovers learn
To count their misery nought, and spurn
Dark-eyed Despair, assured each blow
And stripe they suffer but foreshow
A hundred joys, when they shall be
Made happy in love's victory.
O blessed hope that through the strife
Of years gives savour to the life
Of lovers.

Gentle Hope is kind,
And never laggeth far behind
A brave man's footsteps till the end
Of life approacheth, but doth lend
Comfort and light, although he be
Bowed to the earth with misery.
Nay, e'en the wretch who feels the rope
Around his neck, still clings to Hope.

She 'tis whose brightness will sustain
Thy spirit though it flag and wane
With weariness, and presently
Shalt thou be dowered and blessed with three
Good gifts, whence those may ever get
Ease, who are caught in my sweet net.

Cupid's three gifts

The first of these which solace brings
To those whose hearts endure the stings
Of loving, hight Sweet-Thought, which gives
Blessings untold where Hope still lives.
Whene'er the lover groans and sighs,
As one who 'neath the torture dies,
Sweet-Thought steps in to drive away
His grief, and set in bright array
The longed-for joys of her whom he,
Dreameth, through Hope, may one day be
His high reward.
Before his eyes
He sees her thousand graces rise:
The rose-red lips whence fragrant breath
Exhales, like waft from thyme-grown heath;
The laughing eyes, the mignon nose
Of perfect form; his being glows
With rapture, while before him pass
Her beauties pictured in the glass
Of memory: o'er and o'er again
Of such sweet solace is he fain,
As dear remembrance of a smile
Or gracious look affords him, while
Recall of some kind welcome given
Transports his soul to highest heaven,

Of Soft-Speech

And thuswise doth Sweet-Thought assuage
The storms of poignant grief that rage
In lovers' breasts.
I give to thee
This precious boon, and verily,
If thou my next gift valuest less,
Reproach be thine for thanklessness.

Soft-Speech my next gift hath for name,
Which many a man, and many a dame,
Have found of great avail; for all
To whom the pains of love befall,
Beyond aught else desire to hear
Their passion talked of. Proof most clear
Hereof assuredly we see
Through her who sang thus merrily:
'I am,' saith she, 'in joyous mind,
Whene'er I hear sweet words and kind,
Exalt my love, for whosoe'er
Singeth his praises, kills my care.'
Of Soft-Speech knew she all the ways
And secrets, and had made essays
Therein, full many a time.
Choose thou,
From out your fellows, one ye trow
For wise and faithful, and to him
Pour forth thine heart when all abrim
'Tis filled with love, for comfort great
It giveth to communicate
To some dear friend one's hopes and fears,
From whom, when all around appears
Hopeless, some ease we yet may find:

Together may ye give your mind

To speak of her whose beauties fill
Thy ravished heart. **A sympathetic friend**
With ready will,
Thy tongue will every thought confess
That racks thy breast with anxiousness,
And thou wilt counsel with thy friend
How thou most fruitfully mayst spend
Thy life and goods to give delight
To her thou lovest
If the might
Of love hath struck thy friend, 'tis well,
His heart will know the tale ye tell,
And to thy sympathetic ear
Confide his hope, his joy, his fear,
Revealing if his love be maid,
Or light o' love, or widow staid,
And who she be, and what her name.
Then thou from him wouldst fear no shame,
Or treacherous word, but all he saith
Believe, while he in thee puts faith.
Then shalt thou feel that passing good
It is to have in friendlihood
A man to whom thou dar'st to show
Thine inmost heart, and thou shalt know,
Whenso hereof thou makest proof
How greatly works it thy behoof.

My third gift, hight Sweet-Looks, hath birth
Of amorous eyes; of passing worth
It is to those whose cruel fate
Enforces them long years to wait
Their hope's fulfilment; have a care
To keep thee near thy flame or ne'er

The value of Sweet-Looks

Can Sweet-Looks help thee, though above
All else he serves the cause of love.
Ah, happy those who day by day
God keeps from wandering far away
From that sweet object of desire
That burns their hearts like holy fire:
Each day their longing eyes have caught
That sight, all misery count they nought,
Nor raging winds, or rains they fear,
Or wrong, or danger, if anear
Their loved one they may come; when once
With love the eyes begin to dance,
They will not selfishly enjoy
Their happy moments, but employ
The heart likewise, and give it peace,
For through soft eyes a rich increase
Of joyance woe-worn hearts may gain,
And darkest clouds disperse amain.

As new-born morning chaseth night
Across the hills, and haileth light,
E'en so Sweet-Looks, like dawning clears
Dark clouds from lovers' hearts and cheers
Their drooping spirits, which through day
And night have worn long hours away
In sighs and tears, for sad hearts rise
From grief to joy through love's bright eyes.

Thus as a faithful master, I
Thy faults and errors, truthfully
Have told thee in plain speech, and named
Fair means whereby, all unashamed,
Lovers may gain their chief desire.
Suffer thou not thine heart to tire

Of those my four most precious gifts, **The God of Love departs**
The use whereof the heart uplifts
To peace and happiness. Sweet-Speech,
Soft-Looks, Sweet-Thought, and Hope shall teach
Thy heart content, and they again
Will further blessings bring to fain
And cheer thy heart; meanwhile the four
I've given to thee, be thankful for."

XVIII

The Lover plains that forth doth go
The God, and leaves him lost in woe.

NO sooner was his counsel sped,
Than suddenly, quick vanishèd
The Lord of Love, and all amazed
I stood, as one aghast and dazed.
Once more I felt misease to prick
My soul with anguish to the quick,
And straightway felt that I must gain
The rosebud, would I cure the pain
That racked my wounded heart. To none
I looked for help except alone
The God of Love. Full well I knew
That vain and foolish 'twere to sue
For others' aid: no power but his
Could save me in this pass ywis.
A hedge thick-grown with thorns stood round
The rose-tree, but at one short bound
Had I o'erpassed its height, and bent
My hand to pluck the bud, whose scent

Fair-Welcome appears

Perfumed the air, save that I feared,
To be estopped, whene'er I neared
The goal I sought, and fail to get
The prize whereon my soul was set.

XIX

Fair-Welcome here the Lover learneth
How that for which his spirit yearneth
May be attained, and courteously
Leads where he sorely longs to be.

BESIDE the hedge awhile I stood,
With wavering heart, in dubious mood,
When towards me came, with gracious mien,
A youth whose aspect well I ween
Lord Momus had not dared to blame.
Quoth he: "Fair-Welcome is my name,
The son of kind-heart Courtesy."
With graceful gest he showed to me
A path, and noting my surprise,
Thus spake he forth in friendly wise.

Fair-Welcome speaks.

"Fair sir, if 'tis your wish to find
How you perchance may come behind
The hedge, to taste the odour sweet
The roses breathe, you may your feet
By my assistance set therein,
Thy promise given, that nought of sin
Or folly moves thee. Willingly,
That understood, I promise thee,
To that fair rose-tree free access,
Of generous love and friendliness."

The Lover answers.

"Fair sir, with right goodwill," I cried,
"I take your welcome word; beside
My power of speech it is to give
You worthy thanks, but while I live
Shall be your debtor."
By his aid
I climbed the thorn-set hedge, and made
My way within the envious close
That circled round the longed-for Rose.
To seek one special bud I ran
Which seemed to me more fragrant than
The host of others, and with me
Fair-Welcome went, in company.
I need not ask you to believe
What rapture 'twas to thus achieve
The object of my one desire—
The Rose—which burnt my heart like fire,
And thanks, untold, Fair-Welcome gained,
Through whom I had this goal attained.
But out, alas! unhappy I,
A villain wretch was hid hard by,
Danger to wit, the forge of woes
For all who dare approach the Rose.
Within a corner dim lurked he,
Concealed by grass and greenery,
Watching, with envious eye, whoso
Should venture near the Rose to go.
With this foul churl were other three,
Whose care it is love's path should be
Beset with briars; vile Evil-Tongue,
And Shame and Fear: the best among

Danger lies hidden

Of Shame and Fear

The three was Shame, and know that she
Cometh of doubtful ancestry;
Her mother Reason hight, her sire,
Alas! was foul Misdeed, a dire
And bloody monster, to whom ne'er
Did Reason yield herself, but bare
Her daughter, when by sad mischance
Misdeed had cast on her one glance;
And when God's will it was that Shame
Was thus engendered, so it came
That Chastity, who erst had been
Of Roses and of Rose-buds queen
And guardian, finding her beset
By robbers, vainly sought to get
Swift aid.
Now Venus 'tis, forsooth,
Who day and night inciteth youth
To reive the Roses.
Chastity,
By Venus sorely vexed, the knee
To Reason bent, and asked from her
Her child, as help and succourer.

Then Reason fired with will to save
The Rosebuds, heard her prayer, and gave
Her virtuous, innocent daughter, Shame.
And Jealousy moreover came
With Fear, than these none better know
Dame Venus' wiles to overthrow;
And evermore this well-met trine
Of subtle castellans, combine
That none may Rosebud seize or Rose.

Now being well within the close,

Almost I deemed me near my end,
For prompt Fair-Welcome was to lend
His help thereto, should not these three,
By sad mischance get sight of me.
And now he bid me come anear
And touch the Rose-tree, scorning fear,
Whereon the Rose-bud grew, and seeing,
How longing therefor, sapped my being,
Stretched forth his hand, and plucked a leaf
From off the Rose-tree's plenteous sheaf.
This leaf I set to deck my breast,
Deeming the gift a worthy test
That friendliwise Fair-Welcome stood
In my regard, and likelihood
I had of good success.
Then bold
I felt with hope assured, and told
Fair-Welcome how my heart above
All else was captive-led by Love.
"One thing alone, fair sir, can give
To me enjoyment while I live;
For in my heart is buried deep
A wound, whose pulses banish sleep.
Alas! what words can e'er describe
My case, whereat forbear to gibe
Or mock, for rather were I torn
In pieces, than provoke your scorn."

The Lover near the Rose

Fair-Welcome.

"Speak forth," quoth he, "your full desire,
Nor fear you aught to raise mine ire
Through that you say, whate'er it be."

The Lover.

Danger appears "Fair sir," I answered, "pity me,
Whom Love hath seized within his grip,
Nor fear that falsehood stains my lip.
Through Love my heart is doomed to feel
Five cruel wounds, which nought may heal
Unless I win that opening rose,
Than which, the world's round circle knows
Nought else so sweet. For it I live,
Or die, content my life to give
Therefor."—Fair-Welcome paled with fear,

Fair-Welcome.

And cried: "O brother, wherefore rear
Within your breast a hope so vain?
Desire you then to be my bane?
Alas! I were forsooth undone,
My credit lost, my honour gone,
If you should dare to reive that rose
From where, by God's hand set, it grows
Unharmed. A villain's act I trow
Is that you dream of. Suffer now
That beauteous bud, whereso 'twas born,
To flourish still, my hand would scorn
The crime your mouth doth rashly bid."

The Author.

Then Danger, who lay closely hid
Hard by, sprang forth. Of form immense,
Dark-browed, with hair as stiff and dense

As spike-set herse, his red eyes burned
Like fire above his nose upturned,
While loudly, maniac-voiced, he cried:

The Lover put to flight

Danger.

"Fair-Welcome, are you then beside
Your wit to bring a gallant thus
Anear the Rose? most infamous
Is his intent towards you; no one
But you this great disgrace had done.
To serve a felon is to be
Partaker of his felony.
A kindness you have will to do
To him, who but betrayeth you."

XX

This tells how Danger, filled with ire,
Expels, with ignominy dire,
The Lover, and Fair-Welcome eke,
Whose grief no words e'er framed could speak.

"FLY, slave! begone from out my sight,
Ere on your pate my club doth light!
This fool, Fair-Welcome, little knew
The man he gave his aid unto,
For in your speech have you betrayed
The treachery that my hand hath stayed;
Avaunt! nor seek you to explain
Your crime, with me fair words are vain."

XXI

Danger, fell guardian of the Rose,
The Lover drives from out the close.
Upon his neck a club he bare,
As he a thief or madman were.

Escape from Danger

SMALL lust had I to stay therein,
'Neath Danger's scowling, hideous grin,
But quick as squirrel o'er the ledge
Of thorns and briers that formed the hedge
I scrambled, and heard Danger shout,
Shaking his monstrous head about,
That if thereto I dared return,
My body vengeance dire should earn.

Fair-Welcome had made good his flight,
And I, a-dread at Danger's spite
And malice, stood ashamed, as one
Amazed, recalling all I'd done
And said, and then my folly saw,
And how I well might fear to draw
Sorrow and misery great therefrom.
But that whereby was overcome
My spirit mostly, was the thought
Of that thorn hedge. But surely nought
Can one who hath not dared to love
Know of the pains that lovers prove.
Love had not failed to keep his word,
Which warned me, that both stern and hard
Should be his service. Ne'er can know
The heart of man, or tongue e'er show,

One-fourth of all the pain I bare;
And thinking on the Rose I swear,
Woe worse than death my heart did rack,
Yet thence alas! must turn aback.

Reason reappears

XXII

How Reason, well-beloved of God,
The Lover warns that he hath trod
The path of folly, when above
His reason, madly set he love.

THEN was my soul all desolate
For fear I had received checkmate,
Till Reason saw me from her high
And well-built fort, whence she may spy
The country far around. Forth came
From out her tower that gracious dame
Towards where I stood. Nor young nor old
She seemed, and he forsooth were bold
Who called her short or over-tall,
Or cumbrous big, or scanty small,
Of limb or figure. But her eyes
Shone like those glorious stars that rise
Morn-tide and eve. Her head a crown
Bedecked, like queen of high renown.
An angel seemed she, pearl past price,
Born in the realms of paradise,
For neither earth nor Nature bare
A being so surpassing fair.
Sure 'tis, if Holy Writ lie not,
That she the counterfeit hath got

Love must be forgotten

Of Him who rules earth, sea, and sky;
Who her, moreover, gloriously
Endowed with power to rescue men
From rash and foolish actions, when
To her wise word they lend their ears.

Seeing mine eyes suffused with tears,
With kindly voice thus Reason spake:

Reason speaks to the Lover.

"Fair friend, 'tis youth and folly wake
Tears in thine eyes, and gladsome May
'Twas led thy tender heart astray.
Alas the chance that fell on thee,
When Idleness, who bears the key
Of these fair gardens, oped the gate,
Glad welcome gave, and sealed thy fate.
Except for her, thy heart had not
Been wrecked by love, nor in this spot
Had Mirth's bright eyes of thee been seen.
Thy folly know'st thou now, I ween,
And while 'tis time, I charge thee turn
Thy face against it, and unlearn
The counsel that hath been to thee
As poison. Though thou foolishly
Herein hast done, thy fault is not
A thing to marvel at, God wot!
With youth 'tis aye the same. But give
To me thine ear, if thou wouldst live
Thy days in peace.
Thou must forget
Love and his wiles, which do but fret
And waste thy life.

Not otherwise,
Danger mayst thou escape, who lies
In wait for thee; but thou from him,
With murderous club and visage grim,
Hast less to fear, than she who came
From forth my womb, my daughter Shame,
Who guards the Roses with an eye
That sleepeth never. Soothfastly
'Tis she whom thou hast cause to fear,
When thou the Rose wouldst come anear,
And Evil-Tongue lends aid to her,
Against each rash adventurer.
For long ere deed is born of will,
His voice the whole world round doth fill
With news thereof: thou hast, forsooth,
To deal with folk who know not ruth.
Judge then the wiser thing to do,
To run the gauntlet of this crew,
'Midst bitter pain, and grief of heart,
Or turn to seek some worthier part.
This cruel sickness men call love,
Is folly of a kind above
The wildest madness, nay, I swear
That love brings oft more carking care
Than madness' self; each lover knows
Ere long, that nought of profit grows
From love: for if a clerk he be,
Within love's toils, soon loseth he
His learning: or if other sphere
Man moves in, love will cost him dear.
Worse pains a lover suffers than
A hermit or Carthusian.

Shame is to be feared

No safety but in flight

Love's suffering past all measure is,
Its joyance but shortlived, ywis.
Alas! how slender is the chance
To win love's joy—which won, like glance
Of lightning faileth. Oft men spend
Their lifedays to attain some end
Which proves mere dust. Alas! but vain
My counsel is, if thou the rein
To Cupid giv'st of thy desires,
And he thy fickle heart inspires
To clasp his knees. Young spirits drift
To folly lightly, but to lift
Them thence find arduous task. Aside
I prithee cast fond love, though pride
Thou tak'st therein, for dire disgrace
'Twill bring on thee. If thou thy face
Set not against this madness, 'twill
O'erpower thee lastly. Wouldst thou still
Master thy folly, seize the bit
Betwixt thy teeth, and holding it
Firmly, therewith refrain thy heart
Ere diest thou 'neath Love's cruel smart.
Who follows where his heart doth lead
Full many a day hath evil speed."

XXIII

Herein the Lover makes reply
To Reason, who would Love decry.

WHEN Reason ceased her preachment, I
Made answer somewhat wrathfully:
"Madam, I beg that you refrain
Your mouth from chiding words amain.

You counsel me, that I with bold,
Unbending will my heart withhold
From Love's dominion. Dream you then
That Love permitteth it to men
To rule their hearts when he hath got
Them 'neath his foot? 'Fore Heaven, you wot
Thereof but little. Love hath so
Subdued me, that my heart doth know
Nought but his will. His golden key
Hath locked it fast unalteringly.
Cease then, I pray, you do but lose
Your time, and fair French words misuse,
Thus sermoning me, who, for my part,
Would sooner die than deem my heart
Despised of Love for falsity.
I little reck although I be
Or praised or blamed, but while I live,
To Love my heart will wholly give:
Forego your counselling I pray."
Then Reason ceased and turned away
Her face, convinced that words were vain
To loose my heart from Love's strong rein.

Reason speaks in vain

Distress and wrath my being thrilled,
The while with tears mine eyes were filled,
To think how helpless there I stood.
But Love had counselled that I should
Seek out some comrade, unto whom
I might, when life seemed wrapped in gloom,
Confide my cares: therefrom I drew
Much comfort, deeming that I knew
A Friend, from whose advice my mind
Would grateful ease and solace find.

XXIV

Counselled by Love, the Lover makes
Confession to his friend, and takes
Thereby great comfort, seen that he
The case aredeth skilfully.

The Lover seeks a friend

I SOUGHT him straight, and did unfold
To him my troubled state, and told
At full the amorous lore I'd learned
From Love, and what sore anguish burned
Within my breast. I showed to him
The tale complete: how Danger's grim
Fierce aspect feared me, and how he
Fair-Welcome chased with contumely,
And threatened o'er my back to break
His club, if I should dare to take
The Rose-bud, or should venture in,
With hope my sweet desire to win.
When all the truth my friend had heard
He uttered no desponding word,

XXV

The Friend's soft, gentle words allay
The Lover's fears, and smooth his way.

BUT said, "Dear comrade, cast aside
Your fears, be nowise terrified;
This Danger, since longtime I know
For one who spareth not to throw
Curses, and menaces, and threats
Against each generous youth who sets

His foot anear the Rose. Although
At first he maketh wondrous show
Of wrath, 'tis nought, I know him well
As know I A B C to spell.
This Cerberus fierce may be appeased
With little pains; he's lightly pleased
With soft caress and humble prayer:
Learn then the way that you should bear
Yourself towards him: first begin
By asking pardon for your sin,
Of his sweet love and gentleness.
And then with solemn oath express,
Right hand uplift, your purpose fixed,
That you will never more be mixed
In plot against him: nought allays
His wrath so soon as flattering praise."

Danger may be appeased

The Lover.

My friend so confidently spake,
As straightway in my soul to wake
New courage, and desire to try
Danger's rude soul to pacify.

XXVI

The Lover loud to Danger cries
For mercy, and with flattery plies
His rugged soul, till thus he gains
The boon wherefor he spends his pains.

TOWARDS Danger then once more I came
With timid step, affecting shame,
But ventured not to pass the bound
That hedged the precious Rose-tree round.

Humility before Danger

I found him standing bolt upright
In seeming rage, and ready dight,
His gnarled and knotted club. Then I,
With humble mien and downcast eye,
Approached him, and exclaimed: "O Sire,
I pray you humbly, let the ire
You well may feel against me die,
Seeing that now, most abjectly,
I crave your pardon, and would do
Whate'er your will should set me to,
As act of penance. Love it is
Who rules my heart, and he, ywis,
My trespass caused.
My mastering thought
Is this, that through all time I nought
May anger you, and direst pain
Would suffer ere that I again
Incurred your wrath, wherefore to me
Extend, I pray, your clemency,
Who have your fear before mine eyes
Unceasingly, and in such wise
To you will render service due
As ne'er shall give you cause to rue
Free grant of pardon, noble sir,
To your devoted worshipper.
Suffer that he but once again,
Who of thy fostering hand is fain,
May offer you his love. Your will,
Or small or great, will I fulfil
At risk of life, and faithful be
Past all men call sincerity.
What more to any sovereign lord
Than life and love can man afford?

Nay, for my own full weight in gold
No man for master would I hold
But you alone."
Surly and slow
Was Danger ere he deigned to throw
Aside his wrath, but in the end
Such eloquent words did I expend
To calm him, that I gained his grace.

Danger seems to relent

Danger.

Shortly, quoth he: "Not out of place
Is that thou say'st: no spiteful rage
Consumes my breast, nor will to wage
Hot war against thee. What to me
Is it if thou lov'st fatuously?
I feel therefrom nor cold nor heat;
Love then—but suffer not thy feet
To bear thee where my roses grow,
Or thou my club's full weight shalt know."

The Lover.

Thuswise, from Danger did I get
Forgiveness, and with swift foot let
My comrade know thereof, who great
And glad rejoicing showed thereat.

The Friend.

"Right well," quoth he, "goes your affair;
Danger will prove him debonair
In your regard; although at first
His way it is to show a curst

Renewed hope
And evil spirit, yet his aid
He oft affords to those who've paid
Him adulation; many a wight
Gains his goodwill who knows aright
To trim his tongue. Experience proves,
That patience oft his hard heart moves."

The Lover.

Rejoiced I greatly, seeing thus
My friend's kind heart solicitous
E'en as mine own, for my content.

I bade adieu to him, and went,
With hurried steps, yet once again
Anigh the hedge, for all heart-fain
Was I once more the Rose to see,
Nought else afforded joy to me.

On all my movements Danger kept
A watch, that never flagged nor slept;
But truth to tell small lust had I
To risk his dread ferocity,
And all my thought was how to bate
His dudgeon, and conciliate
His fierceness, but at last despair
Woke in my breast. I did not dare,
Though groaning 'neath the long delay,
Ere yet his wrath might melt away,
To pass the hedge where grew the Rose,
But as I stood beside the close,
The wretch could hear my piteous sighs,
Yet heeded nought, though in such wise
He saw me as must plainly tell
That Love's thrall bowed my soul to hell.

And, though he nought could challenge me
Of treasonous plot or treachery,
He yet such cruel despite nursed
And fostered in his soul accurst,
That nought could soften, shake, or melt
His heart for all the woes I felt.

Franchise and Pity

XXVII

This tells how Pity and Franchise went
Together, fraught with good intent,
To seek out Danger, and relate
The Lover's woebegone estate.

WHEN life seemed lost, and effort vain,
God sent to aid me sisters twain,
Franchise and Pity, who their way
Betook towards Danger; grieved were they
To see the sad and doleful plight
Wherein I stood. First Franchise dight
Her speech with kindly sympathy.

Franchise.

"Danger," she said, "as God hears me!
You do with menaces unmeet,
And harsh and bitter words, entreat
The Lover, who to you hath ne'er
Done one unkindly act, I swear.
If Cupid's power his heart constrain
To love, wherefore should you complain
Thereof?
The God of Love hath made
This gentle youth his spoil, and laid

Pity's appeal

On him sore burdens, though he should
Be burned alive he never could
Shake off his yoke; and will you then
On this most wretched among men
Let loose your rage, whom Love hath ta'en
So fast within his toils, that fain
Although he be to cast aside
His yoke, therein must still abide?
What then, fair sir, doth prick you on
To do him hurt? Have you not won
Promise from him to be your slave?
And wherefore should your heart still crave
His wrack and ruin? If Love of late
Hath bowed his soul to you, should hate
Against him burn in you therefor?
You surely would be honoured more
In sparing him than some rude hound;
A kindly, generous man is bound
To succour those beneath him. Hard
Is he who fast his heart hath barred
Against a suppliant in distress."

Pity.

Quoth Pity then: "Oft gentleness
May overcome austerity:
But whenso sternness comes to be
Pushed past all reason, then it is
But savage cruelty ywis.
Therefore, O Danger, I require
That you no longer let the fire
Of your resentment burn too hot
'Gainst this poor simple soul, whose lot

Great Love hath cast. I pray you cease
Your wrath, and grant the youth release.
Sufficeth not that you with grim
And cruel hand have torn from him
Fair-Welcome, closest confidant,
For whom his longing soul doth pant
Day in, day out? For every pain
He suffered you have given him twain.
Alas! his soul I count but dead
Unless his friend, Fair-Welcome, tread
The path beside him. Would you do
Him further wrong, who suffereth through
Love's cruelty such woes? Alas!
You could not, or it would surpass
The wrath of hell. Pray then restore
Fair-Welcome to his arms once more
In pity, and the earnest prayer
Accord, that I with Franchise share;
For he fell tyrant were indeed
Who heard our cry, yet scorned to heed."

Pity pleads with Danger

The Lover.

No more could Danger then forbear
Franchise's plea, and Pity's prayer.

Danger.

Quoth he: "Fair ladies, not so bold
Am I as venture to withhold
Consent to that you ask, lest ye
Condemn my soul of villainy.
The Lover may Fair-Welcome take
For comrade, I'll no hindrance make."

The Author.

Fair-Welcome's readiness

Then forthwith soft-voiced Franchise sped
Towards where Fair-Welcome stood, and said
With gentlest words, and sweetest tone:

Franchise.

"O wherefore leave you all alone
The Lover, for so long a while,
Without so much as one poor smile?
Sombre is he, and pale of hue,
Cast out from sight or speech of you.
If you esteem in some degree
My love, I charge you earnestly
Return to him, make no delay,
But speak and do whatso you may
To cheer his heart. With Danger, I
And Pity wrought so earnestly,
That now desireth he no more
To part ye twain as heretofore."

Fair-Welcome.

Exclaimed Fair-Welcome: "I agree,
Franchise, to that you ask of me.
Seeing that Danger grants your boon."

The Lover.

Then Franchise hastened towards me soon,
Lead[ing] Fair-Welcome, who with bright
And friendly glances met my sight.
To tears of joy mine eyes did melt,
Assured in heart that nought he felt

Of wrath against me. Then he took
My hand, with reassuring look,
Leading once more within the bound
That cinctured Rose and Rose-bud round,
Therein to wander as I would,
Nought fearing Danger's evil mood.

The Lover's fair hope

XXVIII

... ...lain
Fair-Content; he the Lover brings,
With many sweet-voiced welcomings,
Within the cincture whence the Rose,
Across the air, its fragrance throws.

AND thus I passed—believe me well—
To brightest heaven, from darkest hell,
For all throughout that closure rare,
Fair-Welcome left me free to fare
Whereso I would, and when the tree
I came anear, it seemed to me
That somewhat larger had it grown
Since first I cast mine eyes upon
Its wondrous beauty. Greater height
The bush had gained, but not yet quite
The bud had oped its eye to show
The golden grain that lay below;
While o'er its head, as 'twere a roof,
The petals bent them for behoof
And guarding of the precious seed,
Which future roses yet should breed.
But, God be thanked, the bud I found
Of just expansion, full and round

He would kiss the Rose

Of growth, and far more fair of hue
Than heretofore; it seemed anew
To fill my heart with extasy,
To think so sweet a thing might be
Seen on the surface of the earth.
But all the more, now jocund mirth
Possessed my heart, with surer hold,
Did Love his toils around me fold.
Lover, for s[illegible]
Without so much as [illegible]n a trance,
Long [illegible] and dale
Rejoicing at the wond[illegible]us chance
That I Fair-Welcome happed to meet,
Seeing how well did he entreat
My every wish, nor aught deny
I asked him. Then, all hastily,
I dared to make him one request,
Which might his friendship sorely test.
"Fair sir," quoth I, "one great desire
Consumes my soul, like ardent fire;
'Tis this, that of the Rose, whose scent
With all the air like balm is blent,
You would permit me one soft kiss,
Bathing my heart in perfect bliss.
Fair sir, for love of God, I pray
You turn not scornfully away
From this appeal, unless in it
Something appears you deem unfit."

Fair-Welcome.

"Dear friend," cried he, "God be mine aid!
If I forsooth were not afraid

Of Chastity, with pleasure I
Would grant your prayer, but verily
I dare in nowise contradict
Her will, and she hath given most strict
And sure commandment, none should touch
Or kiss the Rose, however much
Or sorely he might plead therefor:
I pray you press your suit no more.
'For one,' saith she, 'who should attain
To touch and kiss, will not remain
Therewith content; he then had got
The choicest morsel, well I wot,
And pledge, thereby, that one day he
Should win the rest all utterly.'"

A kiss would not suffice

The Lover.

Thus answered, to my mind 'twas clear
I must forego my suit, for fear
Of angering him.
One ne'er should press
A prayer to point of wrathfulness.
No mortal man, with single stroke,
E'er cut atwain a sturdy oak,
And none may know wine's savour sweet,
Till grapes are trodden 'neath men's feet.

My suit for many a day had waited,
By this or that mischance belated,
If Venus, whom all lovers know
As friend to them, and mortal foe
To Chastity, had not appeared.
Mother of Love is she, endeared

Venus appears

To all his faithful ones. Her hand
Held with firm grasp a flaming brand,
Which scorched hath many a damsel's heart,
Fatal oft-times as Cupid's dart.

Dull were the eye that could not trace
The Goddess in her radiant face
And fay-like form.
'Twere light to guess,
So free her mien, so slight her dress,
Religion's bondage held her not.
'Tis nowise needful, as I wot,
To tell the wondrous robes she ware
Betrimmed with golden orfreys rare,
Nor of the jewelled morse that bound
The precious girdle, worn around
Her dainty waist, nor hair of gold,
That round her knees in wavelets rolled:
The tale of this I well may spare.
But doubt her not for passing fair,
Right gracious, and devoid of pride.
Forth stepped she freely, and beside
Fair-Welcome stood, then straight began:

Venus.

"Wherefore against this love-lorn man
Do you display such high disdain?
This kiss forbidding, which he fain
Would snatch? Do you not clearly see
How honour, faith and loyalty,
Shine forth in him? His manly grace,
His well-formed limbs, his noble face,

The generous accents of his tongue, **Fair-Welcome yields**
Proclaim him vigorous, blithe and young;
Whereof thank God!
On any dame
Or guardian, should I cry out shame,
Who, when such lover prayed a kiss,
With churlish heart denied that bliss!
List then my counsel, and bestow
The boon that he desireth so.
From archèd lips, his breath as sweet
Exhales as southern winds that beat
On fresh-blown violet-beds. He seems
One of those happy youths whose dreams
Are but of soft and sweet desires.
His lips are red as ruby fires,
And close on teeth as pure and white
As fleur-de-lis in springtide bright;
And, to my deeming, nought amiss
It were to grant him one sweet kiss.
So let it be, nor longer stay,
"Twere time but lost to make delay."

XXIX

Queen Venus' ardent torch doth fire
The Lover's bosom with desire
So fervid, that he dares the Rose
To kiss, in faith 'twill heal his woes

FAIR-WELCOME, when he felt the flame
Of Venus' brand, forthwith became
Willing to grant my prayer, and nought
He hindered more the boon I sought.

The kiss attained

So towards the Rose I went amain,
And won the kiss, sweet cure of pain!
O moment blest! O heavenly joy!
O happiness without alloy!
My senses suddenly were drowned
In fragrant perfume, for I found
Love's bitterness was overpast,
Which o'er my life of late had cast
A cloud of woe. What floods of bliss
Embalmed me, through a single kiss
Of that fair flower, so sweet of scent!
No longer will my life be spent
In sighs, its memory will suffice
To hold my soul in paradise.
And yet what suffering have I tasted,
What days and nights in sorrow wasted,
Since first I kissed my precious Rose!
But never yet did sea repose
From ruffling, free of storm and wind.
So is it with the lover's mind,
Controlled by Love's almighty power,
Wounded and healed from hour to hour.

But now, 'tis mine to tell how Shame,
To wear and waste my spirit, came,
And how that mighty tower was built,
Whereon was so much labour spilt,
Ere yielded it to Love's attack.
Of all the history nought shall lack,
But fair be writ within this book,
In hope that she therein may look
Who hath my heart, God save and bless
Her everywise, whose tenderness

To me were far more rich reward
Than earth and heaven besides afford.

Evil-Tongue wakes Jealousy

Then Evil-Tongue, who loves to spoil
The joys for which fond lovers toil,
(For no more reason than that he
Delights in strife and enmity),
Beheld the kind and friendly deed
Fair-Welcome wrought.
A hateful weed
Is he, foul Scolding's base-born son,
Than whom in all the world is none
Of speech more bitter and severe,
And who his mother was is clear
By his discourse.
He, enviously,
At once began to watch and spy
Fair-Welcome and myself, and said,
The eye he'd give from out his head,
If we betwixt us had not laid
Some cunning plot.
Such noise he made
'Gainst Courtesy's fair son and me,
That lastly waked he Jealousy,
Who from her couch in wild alarm
Sprang up, foreboding grievous harm,
And like a maniac ran to seize
Fair-Welcome, who such sore misease
Felt, that he wished himself, I trow,
Far off as Etampes, Toul, or Meaux.

XXX

Here green-eyed Jealousy doth scold
Fair-Welcome for the falsehoods told
By Evil-Tongue against him, he
Loves to load men with calumny.

Jealousy attacks Fair-Welcome

THEN on Fair-Welcome straightway fell
Wan Jealousy: "I prithee tell,"
Quoth she, "how thou dost boldly dare
To bring one here towards whom I bear
Suspicious hatred? Unto me,
It seems that thou too easily
Tak'st strangers for thy friends, henceforth
I trust no more thy faith and worth,
But straightway bound, within a tower,
Will hold thee prisoner 'neath my power.
Too far from thee hath wandered Shame,
Who well deserves to suffer blame
For negligence to hold thee fast;
Full many a time I've stood aghast,
Noting the scanty succour she
Affords her sister Chastity.
'Tis she hath suffered thee to bring
Within these precincts a loseling,
Whose presence doth but cast disgrace
On each and all who guard the place."

The Lover.

Fair-Welcome all dumfounded stood:
Right willingly had he made good

His flight, but nought could he deny: **Shame excuses him**
We twain stood there in company.
Soon as I saw this angry hag,
Knew her vile face, and heard her wag
Her cursèd tongue, I strove to hide,
In hope to shirk her spite's full tide.
Then coming towards us Shame appeared,
With downcast look, as though she feared
Correction. On her head a simple
Nun's convent veil she wore for wimple,
And thus with faltering words outspake:

Shame speaks to Jealousy.

"Madame, I pray you, for God's sake,
The words of Evil-Tongue despise,
A man is he who lightly lies,
And worthy folk calumniates:
If now he wrathfully delates
Fair-Welcome, he is not the first
To suffer 'neath his tongue accurst.
For, ever Evil-Tongue delights
To mar the fame of noble knights
And gentle damosels. In truth
Fair-Welcome, though a gentle youth,
Doth make his leash sometimes too long,
Nor may he be acquit of wrong
In gathering friends too readily;
Yet do I not believe that he
Should be accused of ill intent,
For is he not of good descent
Through Courtesy, his mother, who,
Life-long hath never stooped unto

Jealousy scolds Shame

Base folk for friends? No man can be
More free from all iniquity
Than is Fair-Welcome; only this
His foes may charge him with, he is
Mirthful and merry, and to each
And all he meeteth, free of speech.
Too easy have I been, past doubt,
In passing o'er his faults without
Due chastisement. I humbly plead
Guilty hereof, if evil deed
Account ye this. If I forgot
My duty, I repent with hot
And scalding tears, and nevermore
Shall you have reason to deplore
My negligence herein; he ne'er
Shall step one pace beyond my care."

Jealousy addresseth Shame.

"Ah! Shame!" cried Jealousy, "afraid
Am I to be again betrayed,
For vice is now so widely spread,
That soon I fear all past and dead
Will virtue be. Nor is my fear
Needless, when now we see appear
On every side such wantonness,
Such luxury, such pride of dress,
Which day by day yet seem to grow,
Nor e'er was abbey built, I trow,
With walls so close, well-barred and high,
As safely to keep Chastity.
But for these Rose-trees and the Rose,
I will with stronger walls inclose

Their beauties. All the confidence
I placed in you is lost, and hence
My surest guard is gone. A year
Will not go by before all here
Will take me for a sot or fool,
Unless I hold some safer rule.
But now have I devised a plan,
Whereby to circumvent each man
Who boldly dares to come anigh
My precious Roses. Never I
Shall be content, until a tower
I've built to be at once a bower
And fortress to protect my Roses,
And planned it so that it incloses
A keep, the which Fair-Welcome fast
Shall hold, for fear that he at last
Betray me. And with such strong guard
Shall he be kept, that monstrous hard
'Twill be for him to issue out,
Or converse with the rabble rout
Who'd fain disgrace me; he hath been
Too easily deceived I ween;
But if I live, thine eyes shall see
What gain he gets deceiving me."

A strong tower needful

The Author.

Hearing these words, a shiver past
O'er Fear, who, trembling and aghast,
Stood still, and not a word dared say
The wrath of Jealousy to stay,
Whose eyes expressed her spiteful heart.
Therewith the beldame did depart

Fear and Shame tremble

And Shame and Fear were left alone,
Both trembling to the buttock bone,
Till Fear, low-voiced, with drooping head,
To Shame, her cousin, spake and said:

Fear.

"Fair Cousin Shame, it sore doth fret
My soul to think we twain should get
Repreach for crime that was not ours.
Through April's tears and Maytide's flowers,
Long years we've passed devoid of blame,
Till Jealousy, the green-eyed, came
Brimmed with suspicions.
Let us go
Whither fell Danger lurks, and show
Clearly to him what mischief he
Hath done, that not more warily
He kept strict watch and ward. A fool
Was he to let Fair-Welcome rule
The Garden at his wont. 'Twere well
That we, in plain-set terms, should tell
To him his duty, and that he
Must mend his ways, or speedily
Betake him otherwhere. If so
It happed that Jealousy should grow
To hate him, then, beyond all doubt,
War should she wage, and thrust him out,
As guerdon of the feeble ward
And watch he kept the Rose to guard."

XXXI

Herein 'tis told how Fear and Shame,
In deep concern, to Danger came,
Demanding wherefore spared he blows
'Gainst those who dared approach the Rose.

THIS matter 'twixt them well agreed, **They approach Danger**
With nimble foot the twain proceed
Towards Danger.
Soon they found the boor,
Stretched out upon the greensward floor
Beneath a thorn; a heap of hay
Served him for pillow, as he lay
In dozing sleep.
Then Shame awoke
The slumbering clown, and chiding spoke:

Shame.

"How then! Is this a time for sleep?
A fool was he who bid you keep
The Rose, who little more avail
Than any shearling wether's tail.
Slothful are you, and dull and base,
'Tis yours, vile, lazy hound, to chase
Intruders hence. With folly, you
Fair-Welcome gave permission to
Bring here his new-found friend, hence blame
Unjustly falls on us. For shame!
That you should sleep, while we incur
Rebuke, vile weak-kneed palterer.

Danger reproached

What! are you then not yet awake?
Arouse you! up! for Heaven's dear sake,
And run to stop and fence each gap
That way affords, by which might hap
Some thief to enter. Show you not
The smallest ruth, or well I wot
Your name, once dreaded, soon will be
Scorned for a sham and nullity.
Fair-Welcome's part it is to rank
As open, generous, free and frank,
And yours to show yourself a churl,
Fierce blows to rain and curses hurl
Against all gallants. Gentle ways
Shall win for you more blame than praise.
Do you the proverb then forget
Which saith, that no man ever yet
Of timid buzzard made a kite?
And men who find your mien polite
And gentle, do but laugh to scorn
Your folly, which hath overborne
Your wit. Do you then deem your task
Fulfilled, when you to all who ask
Grant grace and favour? Fie, O fie!
'Tis cowardice, and you will buy
Thus, but the name of witling fool,
Of loseling knaves the ready tool."
Then Fear took up the word and said:

Fear.

"Greatly am I astonishèd,
O Danger, that but half awake
Are you to your devoir; 'twill make

But badly for you, as I deem,
Should Jealousy display extreme
Despite and wrath, for hard and rude
Is she in her acerbitude.
Not only hath she Shame attacked,
But also hath Fair-Welcome packed
Hence, with a cloud of menaces,
Declaring, that until she sees
Him lodged in prison hard and fast,
She'll know no joy in life. Aghast
Am I, that your neglect should let
The gallant in this precinct set
His foot. I doubt me much that you
Had but a chicken heart. In view
Of Jealousy's malignant spite,
Thy soul will be to evil plight
Reduced, or greatly I'm deceived."

Jealousy is implacable

The Author.

Then the rude churl his head upheaved,
Rubbed his blear eyes, and rolled them round,
Shook his unwieldy limbs, and frowned
O'er all his face, then loud did roar:

Danger.

"Great God! what then d'ye take me for?"
'Tis clear I either must be mad,
Or else too long a lease have had
Of life, if I'm not fit to keep
The Roses, even while asleep.
God grant I may be burnt alive
If any wretch again contrive

Danger is roused

To enter here—nay, if he do,
I hope two swords may riddle through
My heart and belly. By my head,
My doting folly 'twas that sped
The Lover, but I'll yet redress
By your good help my slothfulness.
Never again will I relax
My watchful care, but daily wax
More strict, and should a gallant come
Herein, he'll wish himself at Rome.
By heaven, and earth, and hell, I swear
That never more while time doth wear
Shall ye find cause to say that I
Have played the watch-dog drowsily."

The Lover.

A bound brought Danger to his feet,
As though prepared forthwith to meet
The world in arms. He seized his club,
And marched around with great hubbub,
Seeking if he perchance could spy
Some secret hole or gap, whereby
Strange steps might enter.
Thus alas!
By evil hap it came to pass
That Danger, who of late was good
On my behalf, now ready stood
To wreck my life, and I no more
Might have my will as heretofore.
Fair-Welcome have I lost! and oh!
What shivering horror seems to go
Through all my frame, awaked to fear
Lest ne'er again my lips come near

The Rose, my every member shakes — The Lover's anguish
With rage, and all my being quakes
With longing once again to see
That treasure which is more to me
Than life—sweet end of all desire.
The memory of that one kiss doth fire
My blood, and sweeter far than balm
Its odours are, which sent a calm
Sweet swoon o'er all my heart, that knows
Peace only when 'tis near the Rose.
If e'er should fall on me the fate
To be cast out, all desolate,
Therefrom, much rather would I die
Than live in such drear misery.
O God of Love, what boots it then
That I, most love-lorn among men,
Should have enjoyed that dear delight,
With loving lips, with ardent sight,
When thus from me 'tis reft amain
With ruthless hand, no more to fain
My longing heart?

I then were doomed
To be with wretchedness consumed
E'en as aforetime—torn with woes,
Tortured with sighs and bitter throes,
And sleepless nights, and such a hell
Of pain as passeth words to tell.
Accursed be Evil-Tongue, through whom
I fall once more beneath the doom
Of hopeless love, the wretch for me
Hath purchased endless misery.

XXXII

This tells how Jealousy, by spite
Urged on, a towering prison dight
Amidst the precinct, wherein she
Immured Fair-Welcome, for that he
Had let the Lover's lips once press
The Rose, through courteous kindliness.

The Author.

Jealousy builds a tower

AND now behoveth me to tell
How Jealousy, beneath the spell
Of dark suspicious promptings, wrought.

Through all the country-side she sought
Masons and engineers, who made
A wide deep moat, with pick and spade,
Which many a penny cost to dig,
And there beside they raised a big
Thick towering wall of solid stone;
No marsh or bog it stood upon,
But firm and solid rock. It went
Within the moat by sheer descent,
And then rose upwards towards the sky
With 'minished breadth, and gained thereby
Great strength and firmness. Well was set
The wall in perfect square, and met
Each side of equal length, which ran
Well-nigh a hundred fathoms span.
Embattled towers, of stone well hewed,
Rose at the corners, each indued
With portal strong, which might defy
The assault of fiercest enemy;

And every tower was fenced with tall
And strongly-masoned outer wall,
Which need not fear the heaviest stone
By catapult or engine thrown.
A barred portcullis o'er each gate
Hung, ready poised, to fix the fate
Of those who rashly dared to put
Their feet therein ere yet 'twas shut.
And lastly, midmost of the close,
Another strong-built tower arose,
Than which none grander, as I ween,
The long piled ages e'er have seen.
The walls were made so thick and well,
That doubt ye not they might repel
The heavy ram, balister, sling,
And every sort of deadly thing
Employed in siege. The stones were fixed
With mortar, made of quick-lime mixed
With vinegar. The native rock
Had furnished stone to bear a shock
'Neath which firm adamant might shake.
This inner tower was round of make,
And both within and out so dight,
That ween I well, no fairer sight
The world could show. On every side
'Twas circled round by bailey wide,
And wondrous strong; and then betwixt
This barrier and the wall was fixed
A closure broad of rose-trees rare,
Whose blossoms sweet perfumed the air
Both far and wide. A mighty hoard
Of warlike implements was stored

The tower described

The tower garrison

Within the tower, whereby it might
Be safely kept by day and night.
From every battlement looked out
Great mangonels to cast about
Gigantic stones, while east and west,
And north and south, an arbalest
From every loophole peered, 'gainst which
No man could stand who neared the ditch,
And but a dotard fool, I swear,
Were he who rashly ventured there.
A long embattled wall extends
Around the moat, the which forfends
Assault of knights, until that they
At least have shown good battle play.

Within hath Jealousy arrayed
A garrison, and Danger made
The castellan; right surlily
He bears in hand the master-key
That locks the gate, which looketh east,
And under him he hath at least
A thirty warders. Next there came
The southern gate, which boasted Shame
For trusty portress; many a guard
She hired to keep strict watch and ward
By night and day. Towards the north
A new gate 'neath Fear's command looks forth,
The which she keepeth closely locked,
Mistrusting lest her guard be mocked
The while she sleeps, and rarely she
Will open whosoe'er it be
Demandeth entrance. Trembleth sore
Her heart if e'en soft gales sweep o'er

The aspen trees, and fever shakes
Her limbs at each small noise that wakes.

The doings of Evil-Tongue

Then Evil-Tongue, of God accurst!
Who never in his heart hath nursed
Aught else but baseness, at the last
Gate set himself, but quickly passed
From one to other busily:
And if perchance it happed that he
Should keep the night-watch, haste he made
To mount the tower, and there arrayed
Bagpipes, trumpets, horns and shalms,
On which, for hours on end, no psalms
He tuned, but merry songs and lays
And fables told in olden days;
Or times he made a dismal wail
On bagpipes loud of Cornouaille.
Another time he fluting sang
Old tales, whereof the burden rang,
That never woman, maid or wife,
Had lived a chaste and honest life,
But said that nought they loved so well
As legends, tales, and songs that tell
Of lawless love and luxury.
This woman he declares to be
A wretched strumpet, that one paints,
Another he of crime attaints,
And such an one he calls a fool,
While such another fails to rule
Her speech.
Thus Evil-Tongue declares
War on all women—none he spares.

The duenna

Then Jealousy, whom God confound!
A garrison within the round
And formidable tower had set,
Of myrmidons, videlicet:
Her closest friends.
Fair-Welcome wears
His days therein, and hardly fares;
His prison door so strongly barred,
And so close tended by a hard
Old harridan, that little chance
Seems left him of deliverance.
This evil carline doth but watch
Good opportunity to catch
Fair-Welcome out in some misdeed.
As adder deaf, she scorns to heed
The softest word or kindliest look,
For she in youth had read love's book
So heedfully, that every ruse
Is known to her that lovers use.
Fair-Welcome scarce dare speak a word,
So doubts he lest the hag preferred
Some charge against him.
Well she knows
The blood that thrills, the heart that glows,
The languorous look, the amorous glance,
Which all keep step in love's old dance.

So now that Jealousy at last
Hath seen Fair-Welcome, hard and fast,
Within this prison tower immured,
Boundeth her heart, of peace assured
Against all violence and wrong,
Misdoubting nought that castle strong.

No longer hath she cause to fear
Lest rude marauders come anear
Roses or rosebuds, they repose
Safely within that high-built close.
Or fast asleep or wide awake
She, undisturbed, full rest may take.

The Lover's lament

The Lover.

Alas! what wretched fate is mine,
Outside that envious wall to pine,
All desolate and in misery.
What heart but must bestow on me
Some pity, did it wot the price
At which I offer sacrifice
To Love. My wound but bleeds afresh,
And caught anew within the mesh
Of Cupid am I. Short delight
Was mine, and now a darker night
O'erclouds my heart.
What think ye then,
Am I not like to husbandmen
Who cast the seed to earth, and see
With joy how springeth sturdily
In spring-tide's days, and through the hours
Of summer, fed by sun and showers,
The stalk, and flourisheth the ear?
But ere the season comes to shear
The ripening grain, the hail descends,
Destroys the tender growth, and ends
The peasant's fairest hope. So I,
Alas! must see my hope pass by,
And all my patience lost. But Love,
(Who helped my gentle suit above

The tricks of Fortune

My dearest hopes) whene'er I poured
The tale of what my soul endured
Into Fair-Welcome's willing ear,
Caused me to pay my rashness dear,
Dashing from out my hand the cup
Of happiness ere yet a sup
My lips had tasted. So it is
That Fortune's fickle hand, ywis,
A man full oft will raise amain,
Then cast him to the ground again;
Now smiles she sweetly, now a frown
O'erspreads her visage; this one down
She casteth, but anon, on high
Will raise another suddenly,
For she the fate of men resolveth,
E'en as her restless wheel revolveth.
Alas! now falls on me the shock
Of Fortune; walls and moat bemock
My hopes, and promised happiness
Gives way to weeping and distress;
Since now forbidding walls enclose
At once Fair-Welcome and the Rose.
Deprived of these and left alone,
All hope is past, all comfort gone.
If Love desire that I should live,
Nought can avail unless he give
Fair-Welcome to mine arms again,
The source of joy, the cure of pain.

Ah! sweet Fair-Welcome! though you be
Set fast in cruel slavery,
I pray you, keep for me my heart,
Nor let fierce Jealousy dispart

Our friendship, but remember you, **Jealousy is cruel**
That though she keep you from my view,
Your heart is mine, e'en though your flesh
She torture. O keep ever fresh
And free your spirit 'gainst her guile,
Nor suffer that her rede defile
Your mind with treason; keep it pure,
Although your body may endure
Dark prison. Gentle hearts but show
More brightly when they undergo
Fierce chastisement. If Jealousy
Declare herself thine enemy,
Take courage and defend your right,
Nor courage lack to face her spite,
At least in thought: do this, and I
Shall peace and solace gain thereby.
But now am I borne down by dole,
Lest you, within your secret soul
Perchance but con me little thank,
Since 'twas for me, alas! you drank
This cup of bitterness. But ne'er
My heart hath been so base as bear
One treasonous thought against you. None
Dare ever charge me to have done
One deed whereof I need repent.
God knows 'neath what a weight is bent
My sorrowing heart: e'en more than you
I suffer, for remorse doth brew
For me a bitter draught; well-nigh,
In truth, I come near death when I
Remember all my loss. 'Twould be
Small marvel though fear mastered me,

Fair-Welcome in prison

Who now on every side behold
These traitors, venomous as bold,
Who fain would hunt my soul to death.
Ah! dear Fair-Welcome, they their breath
But spend with purpose to deceive
And bind you with the cord they weave.
Alas! God help me, know I not
But what already they have got
Their will against you. Darkest fear
Invades me, lest it should appear
That you forget me quite; what woe
Untold would fall on me to know
That I had lost your friendship, then
Were I unhappiest of men;
All pleasure, joy, and comfort sped,
And hope itself nigh perishèd.

[The next eighty lines, which give a sort of conclusion to the story, are found only in some manuscripts. M. Méon gives it as his opinion that they were suppressed by Jean de Meun, in order that they might not interfere with his continuation of the poem. M. Croissandeau, on the other hand, considers them altogether spurious, inasmuch as they are not, as he very clearly points out, in accord with the spirit of the tale or of William Lorris. As M. Croissandeau thought well to print them, it has been judged advisable to give the translation. They were evidently unknown to the English translator of the fourteenth century.]

[Might I but see your face, and speak
In converse sweet, but once the week

With you, dear friend, it would assuage
The griefs that in my bosom rage
So fiercely, but no light I see
To lead me where I fain would be.
Thus in the direst woe was I
Plunged, when behold, all suddenly
Dame Pity came from towards the tower,
Who many a heart in darkest hour
Consoleth; and at once began
To comfort me: "O sorrowing man,"
She said, "I come to cheer thy heart,
And bring kind friends to bear me part
In that good work. Simplicity,
Joined with Sweet-Looks and Loyalty
And Beauty, and Fair-Welcome eke,
Are 'scaped from forth the tower to seek
With me thy comfort. Though right high
The keep is built, no walls defy
True faithful hearts, although array
Of death and danger bar the way.
We watched, till weariness 'gan steep
The eyes of Jealousy in sleep,
And then sped forth although 'mid great
Alarm; for Fear, whose constant fate
It is to cry and tremble, ran
Hither and thither, and our plan
Well-nigh defeated, filled with doubt
If Evil-Tongue were not about
And listening. But the brave Strong-Love,
Who joys to serve his friends, above
All else, destroyed the envious door
Though Fear scarce dared to tread the floor.

Help for the Lover

A premature ending

'Fore Heaven! if Evil-Tongue had known,
Thereof no power on earth had thrown
It open. But Queen Venus, fair
And ever kind, with loving care
Snatched us the keys, and thus are we
Freed from the tower of Jealousy.

And then all round me in a ring
These six sat, greatly comforting
My griefworn heart. Then Beauty gave
In secret that my heart did crave,
The precious Rosebud, which I took
With rapture, while my being shook
With tremulous joy. Couched on the grass,
New sprung, we saw the moments pass
In soft content; our coverlet
Of fragrant rose-leaves made, while met
Our lips in fond embrace. The night
We passed in transports of delight
Fearful of morn, which all too soon
Appears when Maytide treads on June.
With dawn we rose, fordone with grief
To find such joy must be so brief:
But Beauty much desired to gain
Once more the bud, and I, though fain
To keep it, dared not disobey
Her high behest, woe worth the day!
Whate'er my pains. But ne'ertheless
The Rose no more in hard duress
Was shut, for, ere all thither sped,
Came Beauty, smilingly, and said:
"Though Jealousy should now espy
Our doings, and more thick and high

Should make the wall and hedge, while on
The tower she sets strong garrison,
With joy have I been satiate
Comes not her labour somewhat late?
Of loving friends it hath been said,
Each finds of each the goodlihead.
Love then with loyal heart and free,
And of the Rosebud shalt thou be
Master, and to the tower mayst go
Whenso thou hast the will thereto,
Although it be enclosed and bound
With wall and thorny brake around;
For my part, on my road I wend
Waked from my dream, my tale hath end.]

J. de Meun continues

XXXIII

Dan William Lorris when he died,
Had written nothing more beside
The verses thou hast read. But when
A forty years had flitted, then
John Clopinel the end did speed—
Behold his work, which all may read.

AND shall I bow then to despair,
Abandoning Hope? 'Fore Heaven I swear
That ne'er shall be, for thus were I
An outcast, and most worthily
Scorned and despised. If hope once fled
My heart, far better were I dead.
But Love declared that he should stay
My steps and be my guide alway,
Where'er I trod. But, after all,
Will Hope prove faithful? Though men call

Uncertainty of Hope

Her courteous, sweet and debonair,
Small wit have they who trust her fair
And specious seeming. Yea, although
Sweet kindness she at times may show
To lovers, otherwhiles will she
Lure them to deepest misery,
And oftentimes will Hope pretend
One's love to be, but in the end
Prove false, and many have found her thus,
Most sweet and dear, but treacherous.
How many by her wiles have been
Drawn on to love, yet ne'er have seen
Fulfilment. Nothing more she knows
Of what shall hap, than he who throws
The dice, and often those who trust
In Hope's fair promises are thrust
From highest heaven to deepest hell,
As many a love-lorn wight could tell.
And many a worthy man, alas!
Through her hath seen his best days pass
To wreck and ruin. With her can be
Nought certain, for uncertainty,
It is she lives on. Yet her will
It is, the longing to fulfil
Of those who wait on her. Oh why
Should I then blame her wrathfully?
Yet what avails her help or aid?
Have I gained aught from her that made
My sufferings less? Nowise I trow,
For ne'er I find her promise grow
To ripeness, and a promise fair
That doth not fruit in season bear,

Hath little worth; I still remain
As one beneath some curse or bane
That waxeth ever. Danger, Fear,
And Shame and Jealousy draw near
To mock and gibe, while Evil-Tongue
With speech envenomed worketh wrong
To all good men, and dealeth death
On every side with poisonous breath.
Fair-Welcome they in prison hold,
To whom my thoughts would I unfold
Freely, and reft of that delight,
God grant me soon to die outright.
Alas! I well-nigh choke with rage
If I but let that hag engage
My thoughts, whose vigilance, from sight
Keepeth Fair-Welcome day and night.

Love's three gifts

Thereby my woes will mount apace,
Although the God of Love's sweet grace,
Gave me three gifts of sovereign power,
Alas! small help in this dark hour
Are they. Sweet-Thought avails me not,
While of Soft-Speech no chance I've got,
And nought can Sweet-Looks do for me;
Unless God help me speedily,
They must to me be lost past doubt.
If dear Fair-Welcome should wear out
His life in dreary prison cell,
Held fast therein by treason fell,
He of my death the cause will be,
For never, as I deem, will he
Escape alive. Escape! alas!
Small might have I through such a pass

Why reject Reason?

To bring him. What could my strength do
A fortress-wall to batter through
And draw him forth? My strength is gone
Since that I madly made me one
Of Love's sworn servants. Idleness
It was, with shame I now confess,
That brought my life to this estate,
When she, at my request, the gate
Of this fair garden open threw;
Alas! that she no better knew
Than hearken my insane desire;
Such foolish asking should inspire
Nought but contemptuous scorn, and she
Should have reproved my idiocy—
A madman's prayer should not be more
Considered than an apple core.
And mad was I, and therefore fell
Through her good-nature to the hell
I now endure of sighs and tears,
And doubtings, miseries, and fears.

Right well hath Reason understood
My case; ah! why did I her good
And kind advice, then, cast away,
Love to forego? Woe worth the day!
With justice did her lips reprove
The hasty way in which to Love
I gave myself; 'twas thence, alas!
My misery grew: could aught surpass
My madness? Could I but forget
The vows my lips have sworn! and yet
What say I? Should I then betray
My master, Love, and cast away

Fair-Welcome, who hath been my friend,
Doomed (for that crime alone) to spend
Long days in durance, there to be
The prisoner of foul Jealousy?
Great thanks I owe that generous youth,
By whose kind courtesy forsooth
I passed the hedge and won a kiss
From that fair rose—the crown of bliss.
Ne'er from my mouth one single word
Shall 'gainst the God of Love be heard;
But I unceasingly will bless
And thank Fair-Hope and Idleness
For all the gentle courtesy
And grace their hands have shown to me.
No! 'tis my duty while I live,
That unto martyrdom I give
My body, but still hope to gain
The comfort Love hath promised; fain
Were I thereof, for 'tis the thing
Would once again make joyance spring
Within me. His sweet tenderness
To me these words did once address:
"Thy service willingly I take,
And will of thee a master make
In love, if thou oppose me not,
But long delays must be, God wot,
For fortune cometh not in haste,
And pain and suffering must thou taste
Ere thou attain'st the end;" and so
Thus speaking word for word, did show
The love he bare to me.

But Love has his promise

And now
My one desire it is to bow

To Love he will be faithful

My will to his, and thus deserve
His praise. If one of us should swerve
From rectitude, alas! 'twere I,
Not Love, who ever faithfully
Keepeth his word; 'tis I alone
My sin and folly must atone
By suffering. But whence cometh this
Malfeasance? I know not, ywis,
And ne'er shall know; but Love shall have
Me wholly, or to lose or save.
Yea, he may take my well-loved life,
Or give it over unto strife
Through hopeless years, I bond thereto
As helpless otherwise to do;
Ere long perchance kind death will come
To end my woes, and call me home.
But if the God of Love, who wears
My heart so hardly, while it cares
Alone to pleasure him, demands
My life, I yield it to his hands,
Or cheerfully will bear what he
Lays on me of calamity.
'Tis his to do whate'er he will,
And mine to bend, and suffer still
His yoke. This thing alone I ask,
That whatsoe'er of toil or task
May fall upon me, or if death
Be mine, he let my latest breath
Protect Fair-Welcome, who will make
My sepulchre for friendship's sake.
Receive, O God of Love, my prayer,
Ere yet I die, for him who ne'er

Proved false. The testament
Hear of your liegeman, whose intent
Hath been to serve you well, and who
Hath ne'er unfaithful been to you—
Suffer Fair-Welcome to receive
My heart, nought else have I to leave.

Reason reappears

XXXIV

Herein we meet again sweet Reason,
Who ever, in or out of season,
Findeth, before all else, delight
For erring men the path to dight.

WHILE thus lamented I, aloud,
The many heavy griefs that bowed
My spirit, and all vainly sought
Comfort, I turned my head, and caught
Sight of Dame Reason, who had heard
My sighs, and unto pity stirred
Thereby from out her tower descended,
And graciously towards me wended
With will to ease the grief she read
Within my visage. Thus she said:

Reason.

"My friend, how stands thy business now?
Of thy late folly dost not thou
Grow weary? What dost thou now think
Of lovers' burdens? Dost thou sink
Beneath their weight? Or dost thou find
Therein delight and peace of mind?

Love's burdens

Or bitter-sweet commingled? Say
Which of Love's pleasures doth apay
Thine heart the best? Hast thou not then
For master one who slaveth men
All unawares, and evermore
Torments them? Fickle Fortune bore
Her kindly toward thee when she set
Thy feet within Love's trammelling net,
And made of thee his bond! 'Tis clear
That little fathomed'st thou the cheer
Of him thou took'st for master, or
Thou ne'er hadst laid that fardel sore
Across thy shoulders, or, if thou
Becam'st his man, wouldst scarce, I trow,
Have borne his yoke a summer through,
Nor day, nor hour, had bowed thereto,
But, doubt I not, without delay
His homage hadst thou cast away.
Still dost thou know him?"

The Lover.

"Yea, heartwhole."

Reason.

"You jest!"

The Lover.

"Not I."

Reason.

"Upon thy soul?"

The Lover.

"He spake and said: 'Thou oughtst to feel
Much honoured that thy name I seal
For servant to so great a lord.'"

Reason scoffs at Cupid

Reason.

"Hast thou than that no surer word?"

The Lover.

"Nay, for when once his laws were said,
With eagle flight his wings he spread
And vanished, leaving me aghast."

Reason.

"Certes! 'twas no great thing that passed
Betwixt ye; well it were to know
More of that master who hath so
Entreated thee that, scarce e'en now
I recognised thy face, I vow.
Surely no creature doth exist,
Whate'er his trouble, who more trist
And doleful looks.
'Twere right ye should
Know well the lord ye serve, then could
Ye find perchance some way from out
Thy prison, walled with fear and doubt."

The Lover.

Reason's exposition

"That, by our Lady, may not be,
Love's liegeman sworn am I, and he
Ruleth my heart. Yet do I writhe
Thereunder, and were fain and blithe
To cast his yoke, if shown the way."

Reason.

"Then, by my head! will I essay
To teach thee. If thy heart doth yearn
For knowledge, thou mayst clearly learn
From me a thing by no means clear,
And thou, though ignorant, shalt hear
And know such matters as no man
Hath heard or dreamed of since began
The sun his rounds. This thing alone
I know for certain: if some one
His heart hath given to Love, there is,
To end his miseries, nought but this—
To fly. Now will I loose the knot
Which thou hast found drawn tight, I wot.
Give then thy most attentive ear,
And learn Love's good and evil cheer:

Love oftentimes is amorous hate,
And hating, most affectionate,
Disloyal loyalty past reason,
And loyalty that nurseth treason,
'Tis craven fear, as lion bold,
'Tis ardent hope, all deadly cold,

'Tis reason all unreasonable,
A raving madman, calm and stable;
A peril sweet, delightful fear,
A heavy burden light to bear,
Charybdis perilous and dread,
Horror to sweetest softness wed,
'Tis sickness wrapped in rudest health,
One sound, who haileth pain as wealth;
'Tis hunger overdone with meat,
'Tis covetousness with gold replete;
'Tis one, who sated, cries for drink,
'Tis thirst that doth from water shrink;
'Tis sadness gay, 'tis joyance sad,
'Tis calm contentment raving mad;
'Tis evil good, 'tis good malign,
'Tis odour sweet that savoureth swine;
'Tis holiness made up of sin,
'Tis crime that paradise may win;
A torment full of sweet delight,
A felon outrage pure and bright;
A game of hazard, constant never,
Ever the same, yet changing ever;
Weakness it is as Samson strong,
Doing the right for sake of wrong;
'Tis mighty strength devoid of force,
Yet strong enough to stay the course
Of Phœbus; folly wondrous wise
It is, and joy that mirth defies;
'Tis laughter fraught with sighs and tears,
Repose that knows no rest for years;
'Tis hell endowed with sweetest bliss,
'Tis heaven, a heap of miseries,

Contrarieties of Love

No safety but in flight

A dungeon foul of paradise,
A May-tide midst of snow and ice;
A moth which deigns alike to fret
Coarse woollen cloth and fine brunette;
For love will thrive as well between
Rough blankets as fair silken sheen,
And no man yet was born so wise,
Nor bore such quarterings and device,
Nor proved himself of such great might
In counsel, court, or field of fight,
Nor showed himself so stern and grim
But what strong Love hath conquered him.
Except I those of vile estate,
Cast out and excommunicate
By Genius, insomuch that they
Have given their lives and souls away
To such-like crime as none may name,
Of sense bereft and lost to shame.
Now if it be thy wish, above
The joys and pains alike of love
To set thee—flee—take not one sup
From out that sweet but venomed cup.
For thy disease there is but one
Complete and perfect guerison:
Flee Love, and Love from thee will flee,
Embrace him, and he'll master thee."

The Lover.

When heard I Reason beat the air
With many a word she well might spare,
I cried: "Good Lord! I know no more,
For all your talk, than heretofore,

How from my misery I may be
Deliverèd: all by contrary
You argue, but so far I nought
Have learned from all thy tongue hath taught. **Love's aim**

By heart I know each saw that you
Have uttered, and will gladly do
All your commands; would God I might
Gain wisdom thence my soul to light.
But, by our Lady, I would know
What like may be this Love whom so
You blame and scorn; can you define
His ways and works, while I incline
A diligent ear to all you say?"

Reason.

Quoth she: "Right readily, I pray
Thee give good heed: Love is, I trow,
A malady much prone to grow
Severe 'twixt folk of different sex,
And liable to sorely vex
Their minds. Once caught, betwixt the two
Befalls a strong desire to do
The self-same thing; to fondle, kiss,
And spend long hours in mutual bliss.
Love doth not crave by any measure
To fill the world—his aim is pleasure—
Thereto alone he gives his mind,
Not the engendering of mankind.
Yet on the other hand have I
Known some who loved but feignedly,

Mocking fair ladies with pretence
Of true devotion and intense
And earnest love; full ripe to swear
Black-hearted lies for truths, where'er
They find fond dames, and thus they gain
Their pleasure oft through kind heart's pain.
These are the jolly folk who thrive
At cost of others, and contrive
To show that better 'tis to be
Duper, than suffer dupery.
Now hearken what doth most befit
Love, as laid down in Holy Writ:
Although well 'ware am I that few
Follow the course God sets them to,
Namely, to carry on the race
He made, true image of his face.
Behold the end for which should mate
Man with a woman; to create
One who may follow him when he
Through God's goodwill hath ceased to be.
For when the parents pass away,
Nature hath ordered it that they
Shall children leave, who, following still
Their forbears, shall the world refill.
Thereto her hand hath placed the fire,
Within men's breast, of fierce desire,
That Love's great work they should not hate,
But eagerly perpetuate
Their kind, which work were left undone
Unless soft joyance drew them on.
Nature herein with subtle hand
Doth work, and you may understand

How thus her nobleness doth speak
All trumpet-tongued 'gainst those who seek
Nought fairer in her work to see
Than carnal love and lechery.
For wot you well what those folk, who
But joyance seek herein, may do?
They give themselves as bondsmen o'er
To Satan, lord high chancellor
Of all foul vices, seen that this
The very fount and wellspring is
Of man's worst woes, as Tully says,
Who, in his book 'Of old age,' lays
It clearly down that age should more
Be valued and esteemed therefore
Than youth, for man and maid doth youth
To follies numberless, forsooth,
Push on, and 'tis no simple thing
Both mind and body safe to bring
Through youth, devoid of shame, and free
From ills that curse posterity.

Youth and Age

In youth run lawless passions wild,
Till folly is on folly piled.
By loose companions led aside
Man changeth oft, and roaming wide,
Becomes at last, perchance, a monk;
Within some dreary convent shrunk,
He casts off Nature's glorious gift
Of freedom, in the hope to lift
A fool to heaven when in the pew
Of vows he lives, like hawk in mew.
And then perchance he finds too great
The load, and out the convent gate

Youth's joyousness

Flees; or craven fear or shame,
Maybe, will keep him there, and frame
Excuse to stay until he die,
Sighing and groaning woefully
For that fair freedom he hath lost;
Unless God, pitying the drear frost
That nips his every manly sense,
Grant patience and meek abstinence.

Through Youth's quick goad 'tis people fall
To merry dance in bower and hall,
And ribald mirth and jollity,
While loose unbridled luxury
Doth cause within young hearts to rise
Desire, that bit and curb defies.
Such are the perils that attack
Bright youth astride fair Pleasure's back.

And thus doth Pleasure deftly bind
Within his toils both body and mind
Of men, through Youth his chamberlain,
Who is of every folly fain,
And draws them on to crime, while they
List not his yoke to cast away.

But eld is she who casteth off
Folly; and if thereat you scoff,
Go ask the elders, who have been
Youth's victims, but at last have seen
Escapement thence (and now repent
The madness which their backs hath bent),
Whether they're not right glad to be
From thrall of Youth exempt and free.

Old age it is that brings men straight
With safety towards the postern-gate
Of life, but natheless, though she be
Heartwise and worthiest company,
Few people love her voice to hear,
Nor hail her steps, approaching near,
With welcome; nay, forsooth they hate
Her name as she were reprobate
And villain. For no man desires
To wed with Age and quench the fires
Of Youth that still burn clear and bright
In memory. Still old men delight
To stir the thought of bygone days,
And as the sun with setting rays
Gildeth awhile the world, so flings
Remembrance o'er far distant things,
With specious hand, a film of gold,
And putteth in dark shade the old
Forgotten troubles that, above
The throes of pleasure, ruled in love.
Right happy they if aught remains
Of health or goods as life tide wanes.

Youth's dwelling-place

But art thou fain to know where lives
Youth, unto whom the whole world gives
Such plenteous praise?
In Pleasure's house
Her woning is, who keeps her thus
In bondage, nor desireth she
Aught else than bonded slave to be
To Pleasure; nay, therein she hath
Such joy that followeth she the path
Whereso she leads, and rendereth her,
Both body and soul, her worshipper.

The woning of Age

And where, deem'st thou, old age doth dwell?
To let thee know thereof were well
I trow, since thou must thither go
Unless in youth death lay thee low
Within his den, a dreary spot,
Dark, cold, and gloomy, well I wot.

Within Eld's woning, Grief and Pain
Are lodged, and many a cruel chain
They bind around her limbs, and scourge
Her limbs, and point dread death to urge
Her soul to penitence, and she
Remembereth, all too tardily
(Hoar-headed, reft of every tooth),
How she hath been deceived by Youth,
Who all her years of vigour spent
In folly; now doth she repent
Her wasted preterite, and would fain
By painful penance seek to gain
Future forgiveness of the sin
Committed long ago, and win
Sweet heaven thereby, and thus redeem
Those days, that now so worthless seem,
When youth and all its joyance drew
Her feet from virtue's paths, and slew
Remembrance of how quickly pass
The glorious hours of youth; alas!
Too late she sees how brief a time
Endure those days of golden prime.

Now whenso lovers will to do
The work Dame Nature sets them to,

Their thought therein should be of sweet
And pure enjoyment; when two meet
In marriage, nowise should they fear
Lest round about their hearth appear
Young faces, nor should think to shirk
Duties that wait on Nature's work.
But many a woman, as I know,
Doth desolate of spirit grow
Whene'er she finds herself with child,
Yet dares not show it e'en by mild
Complaint, for fear she suffer blame
As lost to modesty and shame.
But soothly when in love's delight
Twain join, they do but seek to 'quite
Their debt, except those slaves of vice,
Who set their bodies at a price.
Dame Nature's laws account they nought,
By shameless compact sold and bought.
That woman all men worthless hold
Who sets herself to sale for gold,
And he a fool were who should take
A quean who loves for lucre's sake;
Deems he a woman holds him dear
When he forsooth hath purchased her?
Is he so foolish as to dream
A woman hath for him extreme
And tender love, because in her
He finds a smooth-tongued flatterer?
O fool, bewitched with amorous smile!
O fool, that lets a strumpet's guile
Master his heart; wife good and pure,
As jewel bright, through life will dure,

True end of wedlock

Of gifts between lovers

But folly 'tis to mate oneself
With one whose only thought is pelf
And pillage. But I nowise say
It shames a woman to display
On neck or arm a jewel fair,
If some true knight hath set it there
In gift; but ne'er should dame demand
An offering at her lover's hand;
That savoureth much of sale, but she
May, saving still her modesty,
Exchange a token with her knight;
By such sweet take and give, more bright
The flame of love doth burn.
'Tis well
That lovers meet full oft, and tell
The thoughts that brim their hearts, and lace
Their arms in gentle, fond embrace.

But keep good heed against the wiles
Of love unholy, which defiles
Its votary; ne'er cease to be
On guard against venality,
Which heart untrue doth oft invade,
O'er true love casting deadly shade.
But perfect love is born of heart
Where gold hath neither lot nor part;
Nor should man let that love inmesh
His soul, whose trammels wake the flesh.
The burning love which overcame
Thy heart was carnal, purer flame
Burnt not within thee; thou the Rose
Thereof didst wish to pluck, God knows!

But far art thou from thy desire, **The ills**
And that 'tis robs thine eye of fire **love**
And pales thy cheek. O thou didst get **entails**
A fatal guest when moved to set
The door ajar that Love might come,
And make thy too fond heart his home.
Now rede I thee to drive him hence
Who clogs each high and noble sense,
To thy great loss and detriment.
Full many a glorious soul hath spent
Vainly its force, intoxicate
With Love's dread philtre: sad thy fate
Would prove, if all thy youth should be
Consumed in Love's wild revelry,
And thou shouldst all too late behold
Thy life laid waste. If thou so bold
And strong art found that thou canst cast
And break Love's bonds, thou then time past
Mayst mourn, but canst recover never.
But if, ere death comes, thou canst sever
Thyself from love, thereat mayst thou
Rejoice, for he hath known to bow
Men 'neath his yoke who thus have lost
All life holds dear—his power hath cost
Them body and soul, and strength and health,
And stripped them bare of worldly wealth."

The Lover.

Thus Reason spent her words in air,
For Love had ta'en effectual care
That I should nought of profit draw
From all her wise and sober saw,

The Lover deaf to Reason

Though strict attention had I given
To every word, as though from Heaven
Her message came. But Love so held
My heart in bond, that he compelled
Me, as his thrall and liege confessed,
To shape my thought as pleased him best,
Keeping my heart beneath his wing,
While, as with shovel, did he fling
From out my head each sapient word
That I from Reason's mouth had heard
Fall, and e'en fast as in one ear
Words entered, so did they appear
From out the other, insomuch
That nowise did her sermon touch
My spirit but to raise my ire.
Then cried I: "Is it your desire,
Madam, that I should feel despite
'Gainst all my neighbours? Shall I 'quite
The world with hate because the God
Of Love hath laid on me the rod
Of pain and dole? I then should live
In mortal sin that ne'er forgive
Would God; and I should be forsooth
(If I should count your words for truth)
Worse than a heathen.
Either hate
Or love must be to me the gate
Of life. I have small lust to try
The former, until finally
I find that Love has thrust me forth,
And proved his promises not worth
One penny. Counsel strict you gave
That I, all hastily, should save

Myself from Love's employ, or be
Accounted mad; but eloquently
Discoursed you of a love beside
The love I'm bound to, which you chide
So sharply. That's a love, meseems,
So pure as men but meet in dreams,
Where all is fair, and nought is wrong.
I humbly beg thee to prolong
Thy wise discourse, and you may deem
Me fool if I give not extreme
Attent thereto, and hear you out,
For you will teach me thus past doubt
The various forms of love, and show
The loves my spirit fain would know."

Various forms of love

Reason.

"Good friend, no wiser than a daw
Art thou, who scarce above a straw
Esteem'st my sage discourse; yet fain
Thou seem'st to be that I amain
Should further speak of love. Good will
Have I to teach thee, hoping still,
Though doubtful if 'tis worth the while.

Love doth the soul of man beguile
In many ways, besides that blind,
Tormenting madness of the mind
'Neath which thou sufferest: God permit
That thou mayst free thy heart from it.

One precious kind of love men know
As friendship, where two spirits grow

Love of friends

Together, and no difference make
(For love of God and virtue's sake)
Of thought, or speech, or worldly good,
But live in sweetest brotherhood,
With earnest purpose to fulfil
Thereby God's high behest and will.

Each unto each should freely give
With open hand, and thus will live
Fair loyalty betwixt them both,
But lacking that, my tongue were loth
To call them friends.
In confidence
A friend should tell his friend each sense
That stirs his brain, nor doubt that he
Betray his trust. This certainty
Of faith becomes a bond to hold
With grip more firm than steel or gold,
True friends. Such perfect love unites
Those sworn in friendship, that the spites
Of Fortune move them not; though poor
One man become, his rich friend's door
Is closed not on him, but one roof
Will cover both, in earnest proof
Their hearts are one. If one friend see
His fellow tend towards poverty,
With ready hand will he afford
Quick, generous succour, unimplored,
Nor leave unto his friend the task
Ungrateful, help or aid to ask,
For of a truth is bounty bought
Right dearly when with tears 'tis sought.

XXXV

Herein the needy man doth stand
Before his friend, and at his hand
Requires that of his goods he give
Fair share, that he in ease may live.

True friends open-handed

FOR one whose heart is strong and brave,
A bitter thing it is to crave
For alms: O many a cruel thought
Is his before his lips are brought
To ask a boon. Fear ties his tongue,
Lest in his anxious face are flung
His tremulous words. But hath he found
A friend with whom his life is bound
In long-tried friendship, then he may
(Casting base fear and shame away)
Pour forth to him the grief that bites
And wears his heart, for that unites
True friends the closer; who need fear
Reproach from such an one to hear?
And when his loving friend hath heard
His secret, he need fear no third
It passeth to; nor yet afraid
Need be lest he should be a-paid
With scornful words. To keep his tongue
A wise man knows, while oft is rung
A zany's bell. A generous man
To give his aid is readier than
His friend to ask. And if so be
He lacketh opportunity
Or means to help, he grieveth more
Than he who needs assistance, for

Cicero on friendship

Love worketh aye in earnest wise,
Though found in many a differing guise.
If love run strong betwixt the two,
Each hath his part in turn to do,
For this one suffereth that one's pain,
And that one's joy is this one's gain.

By friendship's law, great Tully saith,
That when two men repose full faith
In one another, and request
Is made betwixt them, 'tis a test
Of mutual love; and asking made
With right and reason, to evade
Fulfilment were a thing unjust,
Save in two cases, which men must
Keep aye in mind. The first is this:
If it attaint man's life, ywis,
Refuse to have concern therein;
Or secondly, if one would pin
Disgrace on some well-honoured name,
Scorn thou to aid an act of shame
And baseness. In each case, I trow,
Stern duty cries: Thou shalt not bow
Thy will to his, whose heart perverse
Injustice 'gainst his foe doth nurse.
Such love it is that thou shouldst give
Thine heart to, if thou fain wouldst live
In honour, but flee thou that blind,
False love that but obscures thy mind;
The one is virtue's very breath,
The other draws men on to death.

Another Love will I describe,
An adverse love, whereat may gibe

All worthy men—a forgery
Of villain hearts, that foolishly
Torment themselves for base-earned gain.
Of such sort is this love, that vain
It finds its life so soon as e'er
It loses hope of profit where
It looked to find it, and away
'Tis gone and vanished in a day.
The true friend loveth not the pelf
His friend possesses, but himself;
And little true love moves that heart
Which of its friend but makes a mart
For chaffer.
This vile love doth wane
Or wax with Fortune, which amain
Suffers eclipse, as doth the moon
Whose brightness dims and fades so soon
As o'er it goes the gloomy shade
Of earth, but ere long is arrayed
More brightly as the sun 'gins cast
His beams again on her. So, fast
This fickle love doth ever range
From man to man as fortunes change,
Sometimes obscure, and sometimes bright.

But when by Poverty 'tis dight
In wretched gaberdine, or when
Fair Richesse' beauty fails, O then
This sordid love doth disappear,
But once again 'twill shine forth clear
As Richesse gaineth strength and health;
Cupidity adoreth wealth;
When Richesse dies, it sinks to earth,
She rises, and it hath new birth.

Love for gain's sake

Churls win no friends

Of this base love that I declare
A wealthy carle gets ample share,
And the vile miser more than all,
Who ne'er hath wisdom to let fall
From out his soul the wretched vice
Of hard-eyed, grasping avarice.
More simple than a wild deer is
A miser, who believes for this
He winneth love. Nay, proves it not
He's nought above a doltish sot?
How shall a man who never gave
Love to his fellow hope to have
Return of love? O is not he
Counted a fool most worthily?
The branch-horned stag is not so poor
Of sense as this dull, drivelling boor.
Pardie! whoso will draw around
His hearth true friends must needs abound
In kindly words and deeds, but nought
A miser loves, in deed or thought.
Nay! if he wots his neighbour poor,
He draws his purse-strings tight, and door
Shuts in his face.
Yea! still his gold,
With fist fast gripped, he strives to hold
Till death's sharp sickle clears the field,
For liefer than a scrap he'll yield
Of pelf from out his darling hoard
Would he prefer to be by sword
Cleft limb from limb.
But little part
Hath he with love, for how in heart

So hard could friendship find fit place? **Friends in fortune**
The miser knows how void of grace
He lives, and loving none, must die,
Unloved of all men, shamefully.

Dame Fortune next beneath our ken
Appears; and how she deals with men
Shall be set forth. My tongue shall tell
Strange tales of her, past parallel.
Thou doubt'st my word? I marvel not,
Yet thou in my discourse no blot
Of falsity shalt find. We see
That Fortune falleth, so that she
Oft-times brings richer blessings down
On men who live beneath her frown,
Than those on whom she smiles. And though
This seems a paradox, yet so
It many a time hath proved, that when
Fortune doth sweetly smile on men
She lies, and gives good cause to weep,
Yet lulls them into gentle sleep,
As nursing mother lulls her child,
And oft hath she man's heart beguiled
With favours, honours, and richesse,
And dignity, and prosperousness,
And promise given these things shall last
For aye, though soon all overpast
Is worldly might. When Fortune's wheel
Men mount upon, exalt they feel,
Assured of safety, and are raised
So high, their better wit is dazed.
And when she setteth them on high
She will provide them royally

False friends depart with wealth

With pleasant friends, who all about
Their steps still keep them, in and out,
Whereso they wend, and well-nigh break
Their backs for your great honour's sake
As lord and seignior; loudly they
Declare them prone to cast away
Their lives in your defence, like dirt,
Vowing, each one, his very shirt
Is yours if so you will, and they
Will fight for you whate'er the way
Your arm shall lead them. Far too oft
Men swell with pride to hear these soft
But treacherous fawners, and believe
Their flattering words as they receive
The gospel's holy truths, though not
More worth than those Iscariot
Used to betray his Lord, and this
They prove when riches fleet, ywis,
Past hope of bettering. Though five-score
Of friends they lately had, if more
Than one remain, they well may raise
Their vows to God in humble praise
For boon so great.
When Fortune makes
Her home with men, she lightly wakes
Their worser selves. Contrarily
When from their proud estate they be,
By turn of Fortune's wheel, cast down,
From lordly seat to stool of clown,
Then she, as step-dame, doth apply
(Smarting sore hearts most recklessly)
No plaister mixed of eager wine,
But poverty that stings like brine.

She then makes plain, with rugged truth, **But true friends abide**
That no man, or in age or youth,
Who habiteth this changeful earth,
Should count prosperity of worth
Beyond the slippery hour.
Whene'er
A man, once wealthy, finds him bare
Of worldly garnishment, he then
Shall learn how many or few of men
Remain his friends. For those who came
In flocks around when wealth and fame
Smiled sweetly in his face, are shocked,
And sharply startled, when bemocked
By Fortune's hand they see him; none
Remain to cheer, not half a one
Alas! is left; nor do they fly
In silence, but loud-voiced deny
Knowledge of him 'fore whom of late
They fell, with fawning voice, prostrate.
Nor stay they there, but loud proclaim
His thousand faults, and sharply blame
His folly, though scarce yet is cold
The breath with which his manifold
Good deeds they chaunted. Still remain
Some few whose love no hope of gain
Or place inspired; they still defend
The man they once called 'well-loved friend,'
For on his honoured self they set
Their hearts, devoid of hope to get
Advantage.
Goes not by the board
His love whose wilful hand the sword
Would draw against his friend?

The test of adversity

There are
Two points where friendship forms no bar
To quarrel: bitter wrath or pride
May end its term; and woe betide
Old friendship if a man reveal
A secret given beneath the seal
Of confidence; or poisonous spite
Of base detraction puts to flight
Kind thought of olden days.
If one
True friend be found, ere life be done,
Among a thousand, happy he
Who proves him; for a man may be
Wealthy, and held in high repute,
But yet, forsooth, be destitute
Of one friend's love.
It well was said,
A traveller on his road is sped
Better by friend than purse well lined.
When changeful Fortune proves unkind
To wealthy wights, by dole it is
She opes their eyes to see, ywis,
How they true faithful friends may know
From those who did but boast them so
In Fortune's hour, and proves how vain
To win true friends is wealth mundane,
Showing adversity to be
More profit than prosperity;
Through one in ignorance we stay,
The other clears the mist away.

And whensoe'er it haps that poor
A man becomes, he may with sure

Unfailing test discover who
Among his friends are false or true.
O then he finds how base and mean
Are those whom he but late hath seen
Bowing before him, offering all
That they of worldly good could call
Their own, to serve him. Prithee say
What sum think you 'twere worth to pay
Hereof to be forewarned? Much less,
Perchance, had been the readiness
Wherewith he was deceived if he
Had known the wit you learn from me.
The stroke of poverty had been
To this man better far, I ween,
Than riches, for he then had turned
His back on vanity, and learned
Wisdom. That man is never rich
Who sets his heart on treasure which
Leaves void within his soul; enough
Of simple goods and household stuff
Doth far more happiness confer
Than wealth unbounded; joy doth stir
More freely hearts of peasants fed
On hard-earned crusts of barley bread,
Than of rich men whose barns contain
A hundred moddes of golden grain.

Suffisance better than plenty

Hearken, while I essay to paint
The tribulations that attaint
Rich merchants, who but live to gain
More wealth: what miseries are they fain
To undergo with will to pile
Riches on riches; avarice vile

Poverty hath advantages

Hath seized their hearts; and fierce desire
To have, which nought can stay or tire,
Corrupts their every thought; they want
The more, the more they get, and pant
For increase still, though when 'tis got
Small joy it gives their hearts, I wot.

But happy lives the man who ne'er
Suffers the thought of carking care
To rack his heart, while day by day
With hardy hand he holds at bay
The wolf of hunger, and provides
Whatso he needs, yet never chides
The stroke of Fortune. Well content
He rests with what kind Heaven hath sent,
So long as fails he not to gain
Raiment and food.
If racked with pain
And sickness lieth he abed,
And loatheth in his wearihead
His meat, he wisely looks around
To seek what issue may be found
Therefrom, and Nature saith that good
And prudent 'tis that he all food
Foregoes the while.
If so it fall
He passeth to the hospital,
There shall his sorrows comfort find.
But oft it haps the poor man's mind
Cares little for the morrow's need,
And all the woes hard want doth breed.
But if he thinks thereon, declares
There's time enough for that, nor spares

One denier from his daily gain
To ward the risk of future pain
By timely foresight; cold and heat
Alike with constant heart he'll meet;
And if gaunt famine face him, he
Welcomes his end right manfully,
For all the sooner that he knows
The stroke of death, the sooner goes
His soul to paradise, where God
Grants heaven in change for earth's dull sod.

Pythagoras and Boethius

Pythagoras hath said the same
Within that noble book men name
'The Golden Verses,' fair and bright
They shine throughout the ages' night.
'When of thy body thou art quit,
Forthwith to heaven thy soul shall flit,
And freed from human grossness be
Absorbed within the Deity.'
Wretched the fool who dreams that this
Poor earth our only city is.
Let one demand of some wise clerk,
Well versed in that most noble work
'Of Consolation,' 'foretime writ
By great Boethius, for in it
Are stored and hidden most profound
And learnèd lessons: 'twould redound
Greatly to that man's praise who should
Translate that book with masterhood.
Thrice happy he who knows to live
On that which kindly Heaven doth give
To feed his wants, nor strives for more
In hope to gather needless store;

Poverty light-hearted

For, saith our master, none need be
Caitiff, whatever his degree,
Except he deem him so; the king,
Proud knight, or beggar, in this thing
Fare all alike.
Light-heart and gay
Goes many a beggar by the way,
But little heeding though his back
Be bent beneath a charcoal sack.
They labour patiently, and sing,
And dance, and laugh at whatso thing
Befalls; for havings care they nought,
But feed on scraps and chitlings bought
Beside St. Marcel's, and dispend
Their gains for wassail, then, straight wend
Once more to work, not grumblingly,
But light of heart as bird on tree
Winning their bread without desire
To fleece their neighbours. Nought they tire
Of this their round, but week by week
In mirth and work contentment seek;
Returning when their work is done
Once more to swill the jovial tun.
And he who that he holds esteems
Enough, is rich beyond the dreams
Of many a dreary usurer,
And lives his life-days happier far;
For nought it signifies what gains
The wretched usurer makes, the pains
Of poverty afflict him yet
Who having, struggleth still to get.

'Tis truth (though some 'twill little please
To hear the trader knows no ease;

For ever is his soul a prey
To anxious care of how he may
Amass more wealth: this mad desire
Doth all his thought and actions fire,
Devising means whereby to stuff
His barns and coffers, for 'enough'
He ne'er can have, but hungereth yet
His neighbours' goods and gold to get.
It is as though for thirst he fain
Would quaff the volume of the Seine
At one full draught, and yet should fail
To find its waters of avail
To quench his longing. What distress,
What anguish, wrath, and bitterness
Devour the wretch! fell rage and spite
Possess his spirit day and night,
And tear his heart; the fear of want
Pursues him like a spectre gaunt.
The more he hath, a wider mouth
He opes, no draught can quench his drouth.

The misery of avarice

The lawyer likewise, and the leech,
One brush hath tarred them both, for each
Will eagerly for lucre sell
His soul, and both deserve right well
The gibbet. Such foul greed for gain
The one devoureth, that he fain
For one sick man would have two-score,
And t'other longs that thirty more
Were tacked to every cause he pleads;
Nay, multiplied by tens, their needs
Were yet unsatisfied, so bold
Their lust and hunger is for gold.

Of evil priests

And then divines who all the earth
O'errun that they may gather worth
Of worldly goods, and power and place,
Foremost in vice, and last in grace:
Most evil lives these preachers lead,
Treading in their unholy greed
Vainglory's treacherous path, and eke
Thereby their souls' damnation seek.
Their very selves do they deceive,
For through their preaching they receive
No vantage, though perchance their word
By others be with profit heard;
For if their sermonising be
Attaint with culpability,
Nought shall the preachers gain, but they,
Preaching, themselves are cast away,
And though the hearers virtue learn,
The teachers God's damnation earn.

But let us leave the priests awhile,
And turn again unto the vile
Gold grubbers. Reverence, love, or fear
Of God they know not, but hold dear
Their pence alone: the trembling poor
They leave to starve beside their door,
Till God stretch forth His arm and show
How crime doth unto judgment grow.

Three cruel vengeances pursue
These miserable wretches who
Hoard up their worthless wealth: great toil
Is theirs to win it; then their spoil

They fear to lose; and lastly, grieve
Most bitterly that they must leave
Their hoards behind them. Cursed they die
Who living, lived but wretchedly;
For no man, if he lack of love,
Hath peace below or joy above.
If those who heap up wealth would show
Fair love to others, they would go
Through life beloved, and thus would reign
Sweet happy days. If they were fain,
Who hold much good, to shower around
Their bounty unto those they found
In need thereof, and nobly lent
Their money, free from measurement
Of usury (yet gave it not
To idle gangrel men), I wot
That then throughout the land were seen
No pauper carl or starveling quean.
But lust of wealth doth so abase
Man's heart, that even love's sweet grace
Bows down before it; men but love
Their neighbours that their love may prove
A profit, and both bought and sold
Are friendships at the price of gold.
Nay, shameless women set to hire
Their bodies, heedless of hell-fire!

True use of wealth

Thus fraud and baratry have spoiled
The pleasant earth, which all who toiled
Once owned with all her foison, now
Her fruits are held in fee, I trow,
By few, who are themselves not free,
But bound by their cupidity

Hoarders are slaves

To work as hoppled slaves of gold,
Which they in iron-bound coffers hold
Imprisoned; nay! by it are held
In bondage, all their joyance quelled;
Wretchedly live they as a toad
That writhes beneath the harrow's goad.
What else should be the aim and end
Of gathering than the pelf to spend?
Alas! to this clear truth are blind
These graspers, though they needs behind
Must leave their riches when they're dead,
To be once more out-scatterèd
By heirs and kindred, and small good
Will have of their vile niggardhood.
Moreover, 'tis in nowise sure
That through their own short day will dure
Their much-loved hoard, for who can say
What chance may snatch their wealth away?

Those men to Riches do great wrong
Who kill the uses that belong
To them by Nature's gift. Distress
'Tis theirs to aid; their usefulness
Should not lie dead, for God hath sent
Earth's wealth for mankind's betterment.

But Riches do not love to be
Diverted from their destiny,
And signal vengeance take on those
Whose folly holds them hard and close.
They follow surely on their track
As sleuth-hounds, nor their vengeance slack

Till they have pierced their hearts with three
Sharp swords of dire malignity:
The first, hard labour is, to gain;
The second, fear to lose amain
The pelf amassed with carking care,
Long dolorous days, and scanty fare;
The third sword is the drivelling fear
Of death as old age draws anear,
When, as aforesaid, graspers see
Their self-inflicted misery.

Pecunia punishes her gaolers

Pecunia, queen-like, hath the wit
To scourge the fools who benefit
Nought of her favours, but would keep
Her prisoned fast. She lies asleep
In peace the while these dotards wake,
Swink hard and 'neath her ruling quake
Whate'er may hap; in honour she
Doth live, while they but shamefully
Bow them before her vengeful rod,
And writhe beneath her foot steel shod.
But small and scant her thanks will be
To him who curbs her liberty,
Seeing he must, or soon or late,
Forego her when he meets his fate,
Though while he lived he did not dare
To harness her or let her fare.
But bold courageous men attack
This dame, and mounting on her back,
With spur and rein entreat her so
As quickly gives her cause to know
Her lords for men of valiant heart;
For e'en as Dædalus by art

God hates niggards

Most rare and wondrous, fashioned wings
For Icarus, as Ovid sings,
To pass the sea, so merrily
Do free hearts make Pecunia fly,
And they would kill themselves, God wot!
Unless through her some joy they got.
Great souls know not the hideous vice
Of sordid, grasping avarice,
But ever love, with largess grand
And free, to sound from land to land
Their noble deeds, their proud success,
Their valour, might, and gentleness;
For unto God a generous heart
Is grateful, but nor lot nor part
Hath Avarice with him; like to a foul
Rank stench he hates a niggard soul;
For when he made the world, with wealth
He plenished it for joy and health
Of man, and therefore loveth he
Freehanded generosity.
But pinching, stinting, griping curs
God damns with vile idolaters,
Poor caitiff hounds, insatiable,
Extortionate and miserable,
Who rove the world with whining cry,
That riches only set they by
That they may have, when cometh age,
Sufficing food and harbourage.

But say, sweet Riches, are ye then
So soft of heart ye love the men

With gentle tenderness who cast
Ye into bondage, hard and fast? **Terrors of rich men**
Nay! nay! The more of you they keep
Imprisoned, all the less sweet sleep
Enjoy they, terror and affright
Pursue them, and in wretched plight
Are they whose hearts are aye oppressed
With anxious care, unsoothed by rest.
Perchance a many may be stirred
To hastily condemn my word
Hereof, reciting how great kings
Have shown that riches are the springs
Of glory, when, as saith the crowd,
To strengthen and maintain their proud
And noble state they hire of men
Five hundred or five thousand: then
The commons cry: 'Doth not then this
Show forth their glorious life, ywis?'
But God knows well that 'tis not so,
For all this valiance doth but show
They live their lives in mortal fear.
Far more of happiness doth cheer
The very beggar of the street,
Who feels no terror lest he meet
Thieves in his daily round; but kings,
In furred robes set with jewellings
And gold, atremble live, lest they
To wandering robbers fall a prey,
Who would no scruple feel to kill
Their king moreover, lest he spill
Their blood in vengeance of the crime;
For he alive, they know their time

Kings are but slaves

Would wax but short ere on the tree
He'd surely hang them; nay, not he,
But those who serve him; wondrous weak
A king would find him should he seek
To match him 'gainst a caitiff wretch
Who standeth begging, palm astretch
For alms! The men who serve him? Nay!
Base lie it were if I should say
'They *serve* him,' for by Heaven, I trow,
Though to his seigniory they bow,
'Tis *he* serves *them*; though he defends
Their liberties, his power depends
Upon his servants' will; if they
Deny their aid to him, away
Goes all his kingly might, and left
Is he, of all he had, bereft:
For not to him belongs of right
The people's valour, wit, or might,
Their bodies, work, or property;
No single thing of theirs can be
His, for great Nature gave them not
To him, and Fortune's self no jot
Can give to any man unless
Dame Nature in her bounteousness
Saw fit his life with wealth to leaven."

The Lover.

"Ah! Madam, by the Lord of heaven!
I beg you teach me then what can
Solely belong to any man.
Can you not show me what may be
One's own in its entirety?"

Reason.

"Right well," quoth she, "but understand,
I mean not lordly house or land,
Nor costly robes or garnishment,
Or jewels, or incoming rent,
Nor household goods and furniture,
But something better and more sure.
A thing 'tis, hid in each man's soul,
More precious to him than the whole
Of worldly wealth, for 'twill endure
When things are gone you deemed for sure,
And ne'er from thee can it be ta'en,
Another's heart to ease and fain,
Nor ever can be reft from thee
Henceforward through eternity.
External goods have no more worth
Than some poor horse's outworn girth,
And neither thou nor any man
Can own throughout a long life's span
The value of a garden leek.
Only within us must we seek
That which we dare to call our own,
All else that in the world is known
Belongs to Fortune, and her breath
Hither and thither scattereth
All worldly wealth, and then again
Recalls it, whensoever fain
She is thereto, which makes fools cry
And laugh by turns; but utterly
Wise men Dame Fortune's gifts despise,
And when to move their hearts she tries

Happiness is in oneself

Fortune to be disdained

By moving round her wheel, no sigh
Or laugh from them evokes thereby.
For all her gifts one well may dread,
Seeing how they are chequerèd
With good and ill, and ne'er should stir
A wise man's heart for love of her,
One moment bright, and then again
Eclipsed, to nought she falls amain.

List patiently the word I say,
And forthwith tear thine heart away
From such a love as this; 'twould foul,
Sully, and stain thy very soul.

If thou hereafter shouldst herein
Toward others in such fashion sin
That, having called thyself their friend,
Didst yet, by chicane, in the end
Seek thine advantage, thou wouldst be
By good men held disdainfully.
This love, whereof I have rehearsed
The nature, flee as thing accursed.
Put thou unholy love away.
List thou my speech nor make delay,
But many a thing thou need'st as yet
To learn, since thou believ'st I set
Thee on to hatred: prithee show
Thy meaning, that I fain would know."

The Lover.

"You have not ceased to urge on me
To cast my Lord off utterly
For some strange wilding love you dight.
Though one should travel day and night

To Carthage, then from East to West
Should journey round, until oppressed
With age he'd lost his every tooth,
Yet still with all the zest of youth
Pressed onward vigorously, his skirt
For speed around his waistband girt,
And brimmed with ardour still stride forth
From sultry south to freezing north,
Till all the earth he'd scoured around,
Much doubt I if he yet had found
This wondrous love that you recite.
The world, mescems, thereof was quite
Delivered when the old Gods fled
By giants overmasterèd,
And Chastity, Good-Faith, and Law
Alarmed, did also hence withdraw,
For then, I trow, this love was tost
Aside, and earth the treasure lost.
E'en ponderous Justice, who was cast
In stronger mould, retired at last.
All left this world, outworn with war,
And sought beyond the skies afar
A fairer home, and since have shown
Themselves by miracles alone
To those on earth. 'Twas Fraud that sent
Them hence, who since that time hath bent
Earth 'neath her yoke.
E'en Tully's wit,
Which searched through all that e'er was writ,
Could never find throughout the store
Of ages more than three or four

The gods fled the earth

No love perfect

Examples, since the world was made,
That this most perfect love betrayed;
Nay fewer e'en than this I trow,
Who did by word of mouth avow
Themselves such friends.
And am I then
Wiser than Tully? Surely men
Would call me fool if I should try
To find such love as certainly
Dwells not on earth? Where should one go
For love that lives not here below?
Deem you that I dare soar as high
As cranes, or seek to pierce the sky
Of thought with Plato? Nay, I tire
Of speaking, and have small desire
The Gods should think of me as one
Who'd storm their heaven, and cast adown
Dread thunder on me as on those
Old giants of whom the story goes.
You'd scarce desire such fate should be
For self-same cause dealt out to me,
Thereof have I no shade of doubt."

Reason.

"Fair friend," quoth Reason, "hear me out.
To fly aloft would suit thee not,
But flight of thought and will, I wot,
May all men compass. Set delay
Aside, and list me when I say,
If thou esteemest all too high
The love I tell of, possibly
The fault is thine. Thou yet shalt know
From me another love—but no—

'Tis not another, but the same, **Love of one's fellows**
Though paler mayst thou deem the flame,
And less intense. Of fairer hope
Thou'lt find this love, and wider scope,
For, leaving special loves, thy mind
Shall clasp the whole of human-kind
In large embrace. No one apart
Should claim the fulness of thy heart,
But every living man should be
Joined in one vast fraternity,
Loving the human race as one,
Yet giving special love to none.
Mete out such measure as ye fain
From others would receive again:
Pursue thy fellow in such guise
Alone, as thou in equal wise
Wouldst be pursued, and freely give
Quittance of debt, if thou wouldst live
By all beloved—such love should sway
The lives of men from day to day.

It is because unrighteous folk
Refuse to bear the gentle yoke
Of this fair love that it hath been
Needful to set the judge as screen
To shield the weak against the strong,
Uphold the right and quell the wrong,
To reprimand and punish those
Who rob their neighbours and dispose
Their hands to evil, and so shame
This love I tell of, and defame
Good men with foul detracting speech,
And (founts of ill example) teach

Love and justice

Foul sins to others, whether it be
Or secretwise or openly.
Such people needs must be chastised."

The Lover.

"Pardee! I fain would be advised
Concerning this famed Justice, who
Is held in such esteem by you.
Wilt thou then kindly indicate
Her nature, manners, and estate?"

Reason.

"Say how."

The Lover.

"Most willingly. Show forth,
I prithee, which hath more of worth,
Or Love or Justice? Pray declare
Which of the twain you judge most fair."

Reason.

"What love then speak'st thou of?"

The Lover.

"Why this
Whereof thou told'st but now, ywis,
For that sweet love which fills my soul
No judgment needs, 'tis pure and whole."

Reason.

"Poor fool! Believe so if ye will," **The best**
But if ye ask my sentence, still **form of**
Broad love is better." **love**

The Lover.

"Show me proof."

Reason.

"Right willingly. For one's behoof,
If two things are agreed to be
Needful and fair, it seems to me,
That needed most, must be the better."

The Lover.

"I own that true unto the letter."

Reason.

"Incline thine ear, while I pursue
The differing nature of the two:
Each one is good within its sphere,
And both great benefits confer."

The Lover.

"'Tis true."

Reason.

"And you will not contest
But things which profit most are best."

The Lover.

Love higher than justice

"Well, well, that freely I concede."

Reason.

"Then that between us is agreed.
Now Love, that springs of Charity,
More needful is, it seems to me,
Than Justice."

The Lover.

"Make that clear, I pray,
Ere from the point you go astray."

Reason.

"With right good will. I this maintain:
The thing that's good in every vein
Must be of worthier metal made
Than that which needs extraneous aid.
This point beyond all question is,
I doubt not thou wilt grant me this."

The Lover.

"The matter make more plain to me,
Who knows but what some catch may be?
I fain would some example hear,
Perhaps thereby 'twere made more clear."

Reason.

"I'faith, when thou example askest
For proof, my power thou sorely taskest,
Natheless, some instance will I find
To soothe and satisfy thy mind.
The man who should a vessel guide
Unaided o'er a trackless tide
(A thing thou scarce couldst do, I trow),
Were he not better skilled than thou?"

The proof thereof

The Lover.

"Why clearly, he would know each rope."

Reason.

"List then, and thou shalt see the scope
Of mine intent. If Justice sped
From off the earth, or lay stark dead,
Love only would be still enough
(That Love whereat ye rashly scoff)
By which a perfect life to lead,
For Justice' help Love nought would need.
But Justice reft of Love? ah no!
Therefore doth Love more virtue show."

The Lover.

"Give proof thereof."

Reason.

Justice once supreme

"With pleasure, but
Prithee, thy lips meanwhile keep shut.
Justice held undivided sway
O'er all the earth in Saturn's day.
Saturn, whose son, as Ovid sings,
Cut off, as they were chitterlings,
His father's cullions, and the sea
Consigned them to most cruelly,
And thence was fair Queen Venus born
(Unless old histories be forsworn).
If Justice came again on earth,
And mankind recognised her worth
Once more as in the age of gold,
Sweet brotherhood should then infold
All sons of men, 'neath Justice' eye,
Dwelling together peaceably;
For Love once dead or fled away,
Ruthless would be stern Justice' sway.
But if mankind were joined in one
Great brotherhood of love, then none
Would wrong his fellow, and vice sped
Were not all call for Justice dead?"

The Lover.

"Past doubt it then were needed nought."

Reason.

"Well say'st thou, for in Love's school taught
All men would live in peaceful rest,
Neither by kings nor lords oppressed.

No provostship or bailiehood
Would people need if all were good;
No judge would then be set above
His fellow-man, and therefore Love
Should before Justice be preferred,
Although 'tis true her voice is heard
Restraining evil, which hath been
Wellspring of all earth's lords, I ween,
In whom is freedom lost. For ne'er
Except for Crime and Sin, vile pair,
Had kings been known in any land,
Nor Justice shown her iron hand.
For judges, even from the first,
Bewray themselves as men accurst,
But they their own souls should discern,
In hope the world's respect to earn
As men, fair, careful, and upright,
Not giving sentence in despite
Of truth; not false, with palms that itch
For bribes, alike from poor and rich.

Corrupt judges

But judgment set they at a price,
And ancient usage in a trice
Upset to serve their turn; they clip
And gather, grasp and pare and snip;
And poor and helpless men beguile
Of land or chattels; many a while
The judge who hangs the thief is he
Who ought to deck the gallows tree,
If only he were doomed aright
For all the crimes his hands have dight."

XXXVI

Learn how Virginius made his plea
To Appius, who corruptedly
His fair and well-loved daughter gave
To Claudius for his chattel slave.

Appius and Virginia

"ACORD vile Appius merited,
When he his felon servant sped
As witness false, to foully swear
Against Virginia, maid most fair,
Of brave Virginius daughter dear,
As doth in Livy's page appear,
Because he could not subjugate
Her virtuous mind, nor quell the hate
His suit inspired. Vile Claudius cried
In open court: 'Upon my side,
O judge, give sentence, seen I can
Prove clearer claim than other man
To this fair maid, who is to me
The house-bred slave in simple fee,
For she beneath my roof was born,
And being thence unjustly torn,
Was to Virginius' palace led,
And therein reared and nourishèd.
Great Appius, sentence give, I pray
That, from Virginius reft away,
Restored she be to my good care.
And if denial he should dare
To give my oath, I straight will bring
Good witness to affirm the thing.'
'Twas thus this villain servant told
His vile and treacherous tale with bold,

Unblushing speech, and ere the word
Of brave Virginius could be heard,
Vile Appius hasty judgment gave,
And the pure virgin, as a slave,
Decreed to Claudius. Then her sire,
Most noble knight, his soul afire,
Beheld how this decree unjust
Consigned his loved one to the lust
Of Appius, and that all in vain
He strove to save his child from stain;
So rather than such foul disgrace
Should sully her, he set his face
To suffer grief, than hell more hot,
If Titus Livius japeth not."

The judgment of Appius

XXXVII

This telleth how—the judgment given—
Virginius unto madness driven,
Strake off his well-loved daughter's head,
Though to her life his life was wed,
Preferring rather that his child
Should die unstained than live defiled;
Then the sad head to Appius sent,
Who met his well-earned chastisement.

"FOR not in rage, but fondest love,
Virginius slew this spotless dove,
And then, all gory, at the feet
Of Appius cast her visage sweet
In open court, before the eyes
Of all who stood there, and loud cries

Power and virtue consort not

Of horror raised they. History saith
That the vile judge ordained the death
Of good Virginius, but the crowd,
The tale all heard, cried out aloud
That such foul treason must not be
Wrought, and yet find impunity:
But for his treachery, to the jail
Straightway the unjust judge they hale,
Who there foul expiation made,
By his own hand to hell betrayed.
And Claudius, witness false and base,
Had met the hangman face to face
Had not Virginius nobly craved
His pardon from the crowd, and saved
His pitiful life; agreed he went
Thenceforth to outer banishment,
While other witnesses forsworn
Met death beneath the people's scorn.
Judges, in short, are scoundrels vile;
List ye what Lucan saith the while
In golden verse: 'Vain hope! to find
Great power with virtuous will combined.'
But if with hardened hearts they cling
To crime, and strive by pilfering
And robbery base to swell their stream
Of worldly wealth, the Judge supreme
Shall cast them down to hell, and there
Bid Satan cords of steel prepare
To bind their necks. Except I not
Proud kings or prelates, for their lot
Is cast with judges, whether they
Be shaven pates or people lay.

'Tis not for us these men to crown
With state, that they may trample down
Suitors, and every cause exploit
To fill their purses by adroit
Chicanery, and shut their door
To claimants cursed in being poor.
But theirs in person 'tis to sit
Each cause to hear, and judge of it
With righteous care, for false or true,
With all the points that 'long thereto.
Slaves of the populace are they,
Who win full foison day by day
From mother earth, and not their will
It was to let these miscreants fill
Their maws by foul despoil. Their time
All folk should pass in peace, for crime
Judges should punish, and 'tis theirs
Themselves to mount the gallows stairs
And execution do on thieves,
If no man willingly relieves
Their hands thereof, for justice they
Should do whate'er the price they pay.
For since the people 'tis who 'quite
The justicers, undoubted right
Have they to justice, and a vow
These judges made thereto, I trow,
On their investment.
Thy request
Is now fulfilled, and thou mayst rest
Content, since I have given thee proof
Of all thou wouldst for thy behoof."

Judges the people's servants

The Lover.

Unseemly phrase

"That I allow, and fain confess
That words would fail me to express
My boundless thanks; but yet I heard,
Methinks, one most unseemly word,
Both wanton and inconsequent,
Which, if thereon my wit were spent,
All lightly I could show to be
Most gross, used indecorously,
Leaving you bare of all excuse."

Reason.

"I know the word that doth induce
Thy wrath," quoth she, "but thou shalt hear
Me later purge and make all clear
That word, if such be thy desire."

The Lover.

"That certainly shall I require.
Most clearly in my memory fixed
Is that unseemly word you mixed
In your discourse, when you began
To rail at justice dealt to man.
But my great master bid me not
(His counsel ne'er have I forgot)
Speak any ribald word, and he
Shall be obeyed implicitly.
But since that word I did not name,
To me 'twill not be counted shame

Though I repeat it. Not in vain
He speaks who to a fool makes plain
His foolishness. It is but right
That you should see in clearest light
How you, who hold yourself so high,
Have spoken most immodestly."

Reason reproved

Reason.

"I think I understand the gist
Of what thou say'st, but wherefore twist
My words to mean that I would urge
Thee on to hate? Shouldst thou emerge
From out one folly, pray what need
Is there that what I say should lead
On to another? If I advise
Thee to forsake thy mad emprise
Of love, should that then indicate
A wish to see thee turn towards hate?
Horace hath writ —no dullard he—
That fools from one absurdity
Fall to a greater, and their last
Estate is worse than that they've passed.

The love whereof I raise alarm,
Is one that scarce can fail to harm
Thy life.
If I on thee should press
To flee the vice of drunkenness,
Wouldst thou suppose I'd have thee shrink
From every kind of wholesome drink?
Such counsel wouldst thou treat with scorn,
As not worth one poor peppercorn.

Reason justifies herself

If I condemn a spendthrift's ways,
It follows not I therefore praise
And recommend the converse vice
Of hard and grasping avarice.
I never spake so foolishly."

The Lover.

"Nay, but you did."

Reason.

"'Fore God, ye lie!
Think'st thou to baffle me, I pray?
'Tis not to flatter thee I say
That of old lore thou know'st but little,
And of sound logic not a tittle.
It is not thus that I have read
Of love; but ne'er my mouth hath said
That hate should thrive.
Another sort
Of love is that which I exhort
Thee to embrace, the which I find
To bring both grace and peace of mind.

Another love Dame Nature gives
To every bird and beast that lives
On earth, through which to birth they bring
Their young and give them nourishing.

If thou perchance shouldst wish to know
What is this love, and whence doth flow
Its force, I answer that 'tis given
To all God's creatures under heaven,

That they in loving pairs may mate,
And duly thus perpetuate
Their varied kinds with joyance rare,
Alike in water, earth, and air.
All creatures that Dame Earth doth own
For children, to this love are prone;
Which though it profits divers ways,
Yet casts no blame, nor merits praise,
For neither is it good or bad,
But since the world first rose it had
Its laws, and following those, no wrong,
Or vice, or blame, thereto belong,
But grievous wrong 'twere to reject
Dame Nature, and her laws neglect.

Fecundity Nature's end

For instance, he who eats his food
Scarce merits praise as wise and good
Therefor, but he who nought at all
Will eat, a fool we justly call.

'Tis not this love, I doubt, that thou
Wouldst give thy heart to, but I trow
A love more mad dost thou design
To spend thy youth on; O incline
Thine ear to my advice, and leave
That love, it flattereth to deceive.

But prithee, dream not that my will
It is no loving friend should fill
Thy heart. Wilt thou not for thy love
Take me? Am I not fair above
Ten thousand, fit to rule the home
Of him who reigns o'er mighty Rome?

Reason proffers her love

Behold then, as my love and friend
Thou hast the choice thy life to spend.
Wot'st thou how great the gift I throw
Here at thy feet? Thou ne'er shouldst know
The pain of void unsatisfied,
But over all mischance shouldst ride
Triumphant, and shouldst lordly soar
'Bove proudest king or emperor.
How high soe'er thy soul aspire
Thou nought shalt fail of thy desire,
Seen thou art ready to fulfil,
Unmurmuring, all my sovereign will.

Dost thou with me in love engage,
One shall be thine whose lineage
Surpasseth all men might compare
Therewith, for I am child and heir
To God supreme, whose power and grace
Hath shed o'er all my form and face
His own unclouded brightness. See,
Dear friend, what beauty glows in me:
Yet ne'er hath dame of high repute
Loved with a love so absolute.
'Tis by my father's will I make
That man my friend whose love I wake;
Nor need we tremble to incur
From him displeasure or demur,
But he will guard us 'neath his wing.
Say then, what think'st thou of this thing?

The god who holds thy heart in snare
So tightly, is his yoke more fair

Than this I offer? Doth he give
Guerdon more rich to those who live
Beneath his sceptre? For God's sake
Refuse me not, or else will ache
My heart with pain which maidens know
Alone, who pine 'neath passion's glow.
Bethink thee what Dan Ovid saith
Of Echo, and her woeful death."

Despise Love and Fortune

The Lover.

"From your hard Latin phrase I blench,
Can you not speak plain wholesome French?
Say plainly what you ask of me."

Reason.

"Fain would I thou my friend shouldst be,
And I thy humble slave. Forsake
Thy cruel God of Love, and make
No count of Fortune and her wheel
(Not worth a prune is she), but steel
Thy heart like Socrates, who ne'er
In all his life was swayed by her.
She smiled, his heart grew nowise gay;
She frowned, he laughed her frowns away.
Whatso of good or ill he met,
Was each 'gainst each in balance set,
Nor deigned he say that this was good,
Or that was fraught with drearihood.
No evil chances could destroy
His peace, nor good luck move to joy.

Fortitude of Socrates

Of all who lived was he the man
Judged by Apollo Pythian
For wisest, as Solinus saith;
For ne'er could Fortune's changeful breath
Alter his visage—still 'twas seen,
In joy unmoved—in woe serene.
And even when, because, quoth he,
'There is but one great Deity,'
They brought to him the poison cup,
Calmly he drank the potion up,
Charging his gaolers they should ne'er
By more than one God use to swear.

Heraclitus—Diogenes—
Old time philosophers were these,
Who held it scorn that joy or woe
Should glad their souls or overthrow
Their calm of mind: without a sigh
Or smile they met stern destiny.
Follow these wise men's ways, nor swerve
Therefrom, wouldst thou my love deserve.
But let not Fortune's freaks dismay
Thine heart, although foul tricks she play.
A puny wrestler should I call
The man who suffers Fortune's fall
Without a struggle, but a-low
Will lie, abashed by overthrow.
No man should let himself be ta'en,
But give her buffets back again
With vigour; Fortune faintly fights
With him who hardy battle dights,
And he who strikes and fears her not,
Whether in palace or in cot,

Shall win the vantage. Caitiff base
Is he who flincheth 'fore the face
Of Fortune when he feels her grip,
And suffereth her his feet to trip.
Shame and disgrace it is to see
A strong man unresistingly
Submit his neck to hangman's cord;
Nor sympathy nor pitying word
Have I for such an one.
Despise
With sturdy heart the flattering lies
Of Fortune, whether she pretend
On thee her love or spite to spend."

Trust not Fortune

XXXVIII

Unto the Lover Reason shows
Dame Fortune's wheel, and how it goes,
Pointing what lack of power hath she
O'er men, brave, resolute, and free.

"LEAVE Fortune then to turn her wheel
With ceaseless, tireless hand, and deal
(Standing upright with banded eyes)
Her gifts. One man with wealth she tries
To blind, and on him heapeth she
Great honour, but with poverty
Afflicteth others, and whene'er
Capricious fancy seizeth her,
Round goes her wheel again. A fool
Is he who chafeth 'neath her rule,
Neglecting to enjoy the day
Of happiness while yet he may,

Fortune endureth not

For he by power of will alone
May scorn her strokes if adverse grown.
Give ear: A folly most extreme
It is that men should Fortune deem
A Goddess, up to highest heaven
Exalting her, for ne'er was given
To her by reason nor by right
In paradise a mansion bright;
No house enduring hath she got,
But one right perilous, God wot.

Amid a sea, of depth profound,
Rises a mighty rock, around
Whose bases in tumultuous roar
The rude waves beat for evermore.
The billows never shepherded,
Dash 'gainst its sides, and o'er its head,
And ever and again nigh drown
With thundering burst its high-built crown.
Sometimes the giant's strength awakes,
And so the assaulting deluge shakes,
That 'tis half vanquished and falls back
While draws he breath 'gainst fresh attack.
But ever, Proteus-like, his shape
Doth change, as one who would escape
Cognition of his boisterous foes,
And when he lifts his head, he shows
A thousand flowerets (like to stars
That brighten heaven around the cars
Of deities) amidst the tides,
When Zephyrus in triumph rides,
But when the north wind blows, he reaps
With freezing sword the flowers in heaps.

And blooms and verdure die, as they
Draw nigh unto their burgeoning day.

An allegory of Fortune

This rock doth bear a fearsome wood
Of strange-grown trees, both bad and good.
Sterile is one from crown to root,
Another beareth wholesome fruit;
The one puts forth fair branches green,
Another void of leaves is seen;
This showeth blossoms passing fair,
That stands of bud or promise bare.
And while this flourisheth on high,
That other withereth barrenly.
If one towards heaven doth raise its head,
Another seeks the earth's cold bed.
When buds on one show strong and hale,
Those on its fellow shrink and fail.
The broom shoots upwards, giant high,
While pine and cedar lowly lie
Along the earth; shrub, tree, and plant
Their natures change in this strange haunt,
With variance wide. To dusky grey
The verdant laurel fades away,
Its brightness lost. The olive tree,
So famed for rich fecundity,
Stands barren there. The sterile elm
The gracious vine doth overwhelm
And win her fruit. The willow, bare
Erewhile of berries, giveth there
Fair foison.
Nightingales forsake
Their tunefulness, but screech-owls break

Fortune unsatisfying

The silence, whose discordant song
Gives prophecy of woe and wrong,
Sad heralds, clad in hideousness,
Of evil happening and distress.

While winter doth to summer grow,
And summer fall to winter, flow
Two plenteous streams of diverse source,
And nought alike of kind or force.
The water of the one doth greet
All those who drink with savour sweet
Beyond compare, and he who tastes
Thereof but once, in nowise hastes
Him onward, but would gladly stay,
Drinking his fill, the livelong day;
But yet it quencheth not his thirst,
For eagerly as when he first
Had ta'en a sup, he drinketh still
As though no draught his pouch could fill.
The more one drinks the more doth he
Desire to quaff unendingly,
Nor doth his burning thirst abate,
Though he become intoxicate.

The strongest words were weak and waste
To tell the sweet enticing taste
These wretched sots experience, who,
Their drouth unquenched, must still pursue
Their maddening, monstrous draughts, for thirst
Infernal still, like souls accurst,
Consumes them, till at last they fall
Inflate, like victims dropsical.

The rivers of Fortune

In rippling wavelets speeds along
This gentle stream with tinkling song,
More musically sweet, I ween,
Than ever broke from tambourine
Or silvery cymbal. Those who stroll
Beside the flowery meads where roll
These singing waters haste anear,
Impatient such sweet sounds to hear
More perfectly, but when the side
Attain they of the murmuring tide,
Can nowise find the manner how
To reach the farther bank, for trow
Ye well that when their feet they set
(No more than just enough to wet
Their shoe-latch) in the trancing wave,
And drink one drop, then nought can save
Their hearts from lust of that sweet drink,
And plunging in o'erwhelmed they sink.

Others, more bold, from off the brim
Leap hardily, and think to swim
Across the current; from among
The waves they shout, in accents strong,
The joyousness of their success;
But suddenly a wavelet's stress
Carries them back, and there on dry
And arid earth, heart-sick, they lie.

And now will I relate to thee
The other stream's strange history.
Its waves are sulphurous, black and grim,
No birds flit o'er it, no fish swim

Fortune's votaries

Within its depths, the while its floor
With filthy scum is surfaced o'er.
No purling brook, no gentle tide
It floweth in, but billows gride
Tumultuous, with a dreadful roar
Sounding across from shore to shore,
Like to the threatening thunder's crash
When heaven and earth together clash.
Above these ruffling waves unclean,
Kind Zephyr's wing hath ne'er been seen
To poise or lightly kiss the stream,
But harshly doth the north wind scream
In triumph there, and buffeteth
The surface dark with angry breath.

Its force hath dug dim ravines deep,
Whence towering mountains all a-heap
Rise up on either side, and wage
Unceasing war with furious rage
Of wind and storm, which never stay
Their combat fierce through night or day.
Along the bank is spread a crowd
Of wretched folk, whose wailings loud
Burden the air, while out their eyes
Gush forth their griefs and miseries.
For, ever they, convulsed with fear,
Behold the engulfing water near,
And if within it one should dip
His body till above the hip
It touch his waist, then swift, below
Its surface dragged, above him flow
The raging waters. But upcast
Are some, above whose heads have passed

The waves, thrown back upon the brink;
But, rashly venturing, many sink
For ever 'neath the o'erwhelming flood,
And from the rank and noisome mud,
That clogs its cavern depths, no more
Shall gain the light, or win the shore.
This horrible flood doth boil and churn,
With many a vagrant twist and turn,
Through gorges numberless, and thus,
At last its waters poisonous,
That reek with odours foul, and steam
With noisome vapours, meet the stream
So pure and limpid, and to it
Their own vile mirous filth transmit,
Fulfilled of direful pestilence,
And sickening every finer sense;
The waters of the pleasant pool
Flow on no longer calm and cool,
And that same stream that higher gave
Forth perfumes delicate and suave
Becomes a fetid torrent, curst
With odours that from hell might burst.

Not on the crest of mountain tall,
But where its flank doth sloping fall,
Above the plain, in crumbling state,
As ready to succumb to fate,
Is Fortune's mansion dight. No rage
There is of stormy winds that wage
Wild war, that falls not on it. Fierce
And strong the tempests are that pierce
That dwelling. Rarely Zephyr soft
Descendeth gently from aloft

The house of Fortune

Both bright and drear

To visit it with gentle breath,
And lull those blasts that tell of death.
One half the house stands high and straight,
The other poor and desolate;
And thus it seems as though it hung
Ready ere long to fall among
The rocks beneath.
One part so fair
And glorious looks, that man hath ne'er
Seen nobler mansion; walls and roof
Are wrought of one same warp and woof:
Silver and gold, with gems beset
Resplendent, (whence men oft-times get
Great virtue), never mortal eye
Saw palace built more gorgeously.
The other part is raised of mud
Commingled with decaying wood;
Thin fragile walls with many a flaw,
And broken roof of mouldering straw.
And thus, while scarce can words express
The symmetry and gorgeousness
That one side shows, the other mean
And rotten looks, within it seen
Five hundred thousand cracks and gaps
Betwixt the worthless bits and scraps
Whereof 'tis built, and to its base
It tottereth, as in parlous case.

Within this mansion, bright and drear,
Dame Fortune makes from year to year
Her home.
Whene'er she hath desire
The minds of mortals to inspire

With wish to honour her, she goes
To that side of the house which shows
So gorgeously, and dwelleth there
In queenly state, attired in fair
Rich regal vesting; passing sweet
Of perfumes, and of colours meet
For Iris' self; such tints indeed
As dyers, or by herb or seed
Produce, for costliest garments made,
In silk, or wool, or rich brocade,
For wealthy folk, who dearly love
To vaunt themselves in pride above
Their fellow mortals. Thus her snares
Doth Fortune set, but never cares
One straw for living man when she
Is 'tired in all her bravery.
When looks she round and notes her great
Honour and wealth, and proud estate;
So madly then is she misled,
That seemeth she to lose her head
Outright, and dream that none on earth
But she have smallest count or worth,
Oblivious that on her descend
Oft-times rude strokes ere falls the end.

Fortune's vicissitudes

Then wandereth she about the house,
Till comes she where 'tis ruinous
And all in cue to fall piecemeal,
Yet ceaseless moveth on her wheel.
Then stumbling gropes she, head low bent,
As though she saw not where she went;

Fortune's lastestate

And when she finds her fallen a-down,
Straightway both cheer and broidered gown
Are changed, and all at once of dress
She finds herself an orphaness;
And all her pride of state subdued,
There stands she, as a blind-worm nude;
All she possessed hath vanishèd,
And now doth nought her need bestead.
Then seeing her estate so low,
All shameless seeketh she to go
Beneath the bordel's roof to hide
Her head, for sorrow humbleth pride.
Then mourneth she, with floods of tears,
The splendours now no longers hers—
The worldly pleasures past and gone,
The gorgeous robes she woned to don.

Alas, for Fortune! jade perverse!
Full many a noble man shall curse
Her hand which cast him in the mire,
A prey to woe and misery dire,
While vilest men she sets on high,
Bestowing on them lavishly
Honour, and dignity, and power,
Only that when their little hour
Is past, she suddenly away
May snatch the gifts of yesterday.
O were not then the ancients wise,
Who Fortune drew with blindfold eyes."

XXXIX

How Emperor Nero, in his mad
And cruel unchecked fury, bade
In daylight clear, before his eyes,
His minions to anatomise
His mother living, and the spot
Disclose where he was erst begot.

Nero and Seneca

"ALAS! that thus should Fortune play
Her pranks, and worthy men betray
To misery, while the better part
She deals to miscreants. In thine heart
Bethink thou well of Socrates
(Too wise a foolish world to please);
My love I gave him, and to me
He gave his love all utterly.

Full many examples have there been
Of this in old-time records seen,
In proof whereof will I relate
Great Seneca's and Nero's fate.
But here I purpose not to tell
The grievous crimes and actions fell
Of Nero; such a tale of wrong
Were wearisome and over long
To cite once more; how he with dire
Intention set great Rome a-fire,
And many a senator that time
Met death by his atrocious crime.
Or how with heart more obdurate
Than stone, he sealed his brother's fate;

The crimes of Nero

Or how the monster ruthlessly
His mother slew, that he might see
The sanctuary where he conceived
Had been, then watched her body reived
Of every limb, and, standing there,
Adjudged her members passing fair.
Ah God! what vile and felon judge
Who could to that dread sight begrudge
One single tear, for so 'tis writ,
He calm looked on, nor wept at it,
But gave command to thither bring
Fair cups of wine, and roystering
Therewith, beheld, with fiend's delight,
Unmoved, the matricidal rite.
Moreover did he lay a-waste
The body of his sister chaste,
And gave himself to work all crime
That man hath stained since birth of time.

He martyred Seneca, his guide
And mentor, bidding him decide,
With impious oath, the manner he
Would choose to face his agony,
E'en as a devil brimmed with wrath.
Quoth Seneca: 'Make warm a bath,
Since I must bow me to the pains
Of death, then forthwith ope my veins,
That through the wave my blood may flow
Forth freely, till my spirit go
To that great God from whence it sped:
May he sweet mercy on it shed.'"

XL

How Seneca, that noble man,
Succumbed beneath his pupil's ban;
Set in a bath to die was he,
By Nero's savage cruelty.

The death of Seneca

"THE sentence given, no stop or stay
Made Nero, mocked he all delay;
And Seneca was straightway set
Within a bath, and leeches let
The blood from out his veins, till dead
He lay—his glorious spirit fled.

No pretext Nero had for this
Most treacherous crime, save that amiss
He took it that, since childhood's days,
He had been taught his cap to raise
In humbleness and reverence when
He met his tutor. Cried he then:
'Fit is it I should bow my face
Either in house or public place
To any man?
As emperor
No longer will I bend before
Another, whosoe'er he be,
Tutor or sire, 'tis one to me.'

Sithence he felt it as a brand
Of tutelage that he should stand
Uncovered, as the custom bade
That he from tender years had had,

Fortune's favourites oft vicious

He made forthwith a royal decree,
That Seneca should shamefully
Be put to death. Unbridled rule
This monster (mingled knave and fool)
Held o'er the Roman Empire wide,
That stretched its arms from side to side
Of all the earth; north, south, and west
And east, this madman's sway confessed.

*Good friend, I hope thou hast the wit,
Hearing my tale, to learn from it
That riches, rule, and honours high,
Full power and great prosperity,
And all the gifts Dame Fortune showers
With lavish hand on those she dowers
With worldly wealth, can never make
Those whom she favoureth to break
With vice and turn to virtuousness,
Proving them worthy to possess
The kingly rod; for if abide
Within their bosoms hateful pride,
The germ of every poisonous fruit,
Little to them will honours boot,
For ever as men mount more high,
Their crimes but blaze more openly;
For had they ne'er to power attained,
Their paltry vices had remained
Obscure, but when aloft men rise,
Then comes the crucial test which tries
The stuff they're made of.
Oft I've heard
A proverb, which I count absurd
And false, though many a man, forsooth,
Will quote it for unquestioned truth.

It boldly saith that: 'Honours spoil
Good manners.' 'Twere but wasted toil
If I should strive to prove how vain
That proverb is; no poisonous bane
Are honours if they chance to fall
On worthy wights, for not at all
They change men's natures; if erst good
That nature proved in needihood,
So will it still to good incline,
When on it wealth and honour shine
'Fore all the world; but if poor men
Are vicious, past all question then,
If they arrive at high estate,
They do but show more reprobate.

God all-powerful

The name of power is ill applied
To malice, ignorance, and pride,
For hath not sacred Scripture shown
That power proceeds from God alone?
And no man doth God's law transgress,
Save when misled by foolishness:
And every man who sees aright,
Knows lack of good is lack of might,
For thus 'tis said in Holy Writ;
But if, still unconvinced of it,
Thy soul remaineth yet in doubt,
Nor draws assurance full thereout,
I'll quickly show that nought can be
Impossible to the Deity.

No man would dare to say the will
Of God could ever stoop to ill,
And owning that, thou know'st right well,
That God hath power o'er heaven and hell,

Vile men are nought

Yet hath not power aught ill to do.
Then is the axiom clearly true,
That he who made all things in earth
And heaven, ne'er gave foul evil birth.
E'en as a shadow hideth not,
Except the light, one single jot
Of matter, so in equal wise
The man in whom no virtue lies,
By God was simply left all void
Of good. His soul then if destroyed
And lost for ever by gross sin,
Did not from God perdition win.
Also the Scriptures go so far,
Well knowing what the wicked are,
As say a sinner is no man.
To prove this were none other than
Mere waste of time, for is it not
In many a Scripture found, God wot?

Yet natheless, if thou wilt but bear
Some short space with me, thou shalt hear,
Among a thousand reasons, some
Which, staying not for others, come
Within my mind. The common end
Toward which all living things should tend
Forsake they, yet the first it is,
And highest of all things, ywis.
And other reasons might, if sought,
Be found, why wicked men are nought,
By him who notes the road they fare,
Seeing they live all unaware
Of that one end and aim which each
And all on earth should strive to reach.

The plain corollary is then,
That less than nought are evil men.

Desire not Fortune's favours

Behold ye in this world what pranks
Dame Fortune plays, and less of thanks
Than curses gets thereby, for she
It was by whose supreme decree
The worst of all men was declared
Lord of the world, and 'neath him fared
The noble Seneca so ill.
Therefore let thou no longing fill
Thy heart for Fortune's favours, for
The mightiest king or emperor
Is but her plaything. Better far
Persuade thyself her blessings are
But curses, and to be despised.
The poet, Claudian hight, surprised
And shocked at this, would cast the blame
Back on the Gods, as if it came
Of them that fools were set on high
And dowered with riches plenteously,
And honour great and uncurbed might,
With all that man's heart longs for, dight.
But afterwards he wisely writ,
When he had thought and conned of it,
How that the Gods permit such things,
That later they on scatterlings
May send a heavier chastisement,
Whose day of power hath been misspent
In foolish vice, and do but call
Them into place that greater fall
May be their lot; higher the state
Such men attain, more dire their fate.

Face trouble boldly

And if so be that thou forsake
My counsels never, they shall make
Thee wise and happy, and no man
Shall higher be or richer than
Thy very self, and thou shalt ne'er
Eat out thine heart in dark despair
Or wasting wrath, though Fortune's stroke
Thy friends, estate, and body broke;
But having patience, thou in me,
Shalt find a friend to comfort thee.

Wherefore discoverest thou such dole?
Tears from between thine eyelids roll,
As drops from some alembic stood
Above a furnace. In the flood
Thou mightst be washed out like a rag,
None but a fool, or merry wag,
Would call so poor a stick a man,
For never creature looked so wan
And wretched as dost thou. The devil,
True spring and source of all things evil,
Within thy weakling heart hath set
This love, and hence thy cheeks are wet
With waterfalls; thou shouldst disdain
To show thee so far weak and vain.
This tyrant God whose breath doth fan
The fire of love within the pan
Of thy frail brain it is, alone,
Who causeth thee to fret and moan.
Thy noble liege! thy reverenced friend!
Through whom thy soul thou dost expend
In tears—he sells his friendship dear,
As doth to my poor wit appear.

Brave, manly hearts do not disgrace
Their souls with woe-worn maudlin face;
To puny boys, and women weak,
Leave it through sobs and sighs to speak
Their griefs, poor feeble willow wands—
But thou—stand firm with hard-clenched hands,
When see'st thou Fortune near thee reel
Her aye-revolving, changeful wheel.
Dost thou imagine thou canst stay
Its turning e'en for one short day?
Nay! never since first rose heaven's sun,
Hath rich or poor that marvel done.

Nero deserted

Nero, of whom I lately spake,
And whose mere frown sufficed to shake
The world, o'er which he held such sway
As never tyrant till his day
Had known, had yet no power to check
Fortune, but bowed before her beck,
If history lie not, for 'tis said
Most wretchedly he perishèd.
So did he fire the people's hate,
That rose they all infuriate
Against this monster. Then he sent
Envoys to all his friends, intent
To save his worthless life, but not
A single man he found, I wot,
To give him refuge. Then while rocked
His craven heart with fear, he knocked
With frantic strokes at many a portal,
But, to his thundering, not a mortal
Replied, and he aback returned,
While helpless rage his vitals burned."

XLI

This tells how Nero sought to hide
Within a garden, where he died,
Self-slain. Thus, coward-like, life's stage
He fled, nor dared the people's rage.

How Nero died

"THEN ran he swift to hide his head
In flower-grown close, and with him fled
Two faithful slaves, but all around
He heard the fearful surging sound
Of maddening voices, which: 'Nero,'
Cried loudly, 'thou to hell shalt go;
Where skulk'st thou?' And he, terrified,
Beheld that vain it was to hide,
Yet knew not how to go or stay
So he might 'scape the dread affray.
And compassing his fearsome case,
Despaired he of all hope of grace,
And 'mandment gave his slaves to kill
Their master, and when nought fulfil
Would they his hest, the wretched elf
Fell on his sword and slew himself
Outright, but ere death came he gave
His servants bidding they should shave
His head from off his trunk, that none
Might know 'twas he, and, that stroke done,
They should his corse without delay
Burn on a pyre to ashes grey.
This may be read by him who dives
Among old parchments in the lives
Of those twelve Cæsars, which were writ
By Suetonius, who doth twit

The law of Christ as tale absurd
(This is the wretched caitiff's word)
And mischievous. Alas! the day,
That mouth of man such words should say!
With Nero perished out the line
Of Cæsar, and, as I opine,
This monster so was void of grace
Or virtue, that 'twere meet his race
Should fall extinct. He nobly reigned
Five years before with crime he stained
His annals, and no prince e'er gave
A fairer promise by his grave
And loyal rule; so good at first
Appeared this felon-king accurst,
That once in audience given at Rome,
When some poor caitiff to that home
Whence none return he should consign,
He cried: 'O evil fate is mine
That e'er my hand hath learned to write.'

Fair promise blighted

This monster stood upon the height
Of empire more than sixteen years,
Deceiving hopes, fulfilling fears,
And for his whole life thirty-two
Years good and evil lived he through.
But, stirred to felony by pride,
So grievously he turned aside
From virtue, that he lastly fell
From highest grace to lowest hell
Of crime and sin, as thou hast heard,
And Fortune's freak it was preferred
Him thus on high, that she might show
Her power to raise and overthrow.

King Crœsus' dream

Neither could Crœsus, Lydia's king,
And mighty conqueror, 'scape the sting
Of Fortune. On the burning pyre
He stood and round him leapt the fire,
When suddenly the lowering sky
Disburdened it so copiously
That died the flames; his foes dismayed
Thereat took flight, nor long time stayed
King Crœsus, but escaped his bane.

Then ruled he o'er his land again;
But yet, once more by Fortune flung
In durance, was he lastly hung;
But ere that happed this vision dreamed:
High on a beech tree's top he seemed,
Where mighty Jupiter had set
Himself to wash him: when all wet
By Jove's hands made, his glorious son,
Phœbus, with towel, had begun
To dry his skin. Alas! too true
That dreaming proved; he thereby grew
To hateful pride and foolishness,
And then succumbed to sore distress.
Though when to Phanie fair, his child,
He told this dream so strange and wild,
She strove to tear from off his eyes
The veil, for she was passing wise
To pierce the visions of the night,
And show their truth in morning light."

XLII

This tells how Phanie to the king
Gave warning that his pride would bring
Him shameful death. The dream but sung
His knell, when he on gallows hung.

Phanie's interpretation

"'FAIR father,' quoth the damosel,
'This dream but rings your passing bell;
I count your pride not worth a cock;
The jade hight Fortune doth but mock
And jeer at you; by this portent
I clearly read that she is bent
That you, ere long, on gallows tree
Shall perish; and while mournfully,
The sport of winds, it swings in air,
Heaven's rain upon your body bare
Shall beat, and then the scorching sun
Shall dry it. So doth Fortune run
Against you. She but gives and takes
As pleaseth her; one while she makes
The highest nought, and then amain
The pauper setteth up again
In wealth or splendour. Why should I
Betray your heart with flattery?
Fortune hath ruthlessly assigned
You to the gibbet, and will bind
The halter close about your neck,
And that gold crown that now doth deck
Your well-loved head will she uplift
Therefrom, and then as royal gift

Jupiter and Apollo

Bestow it where you dream not. Hear,
While yet I make my rede more clear:
God Jupiter, who you did wash,
Is air and cloud, whose rains shall lash
Your corpse; and Phœbus, who bedried
Your body, clearly typified
The sun; the high beech tree,
What should it but the gallows be?
This cruel path you needs must tread,
Dear father; on your glorious head
Will Fortune wreak her wrath as one
Whose arrogant pride hath vengeance won:
No man, whate'er his dignity,
More than an apple counteth she.
High loyalty or treachery base,
Lordly estate or pauper case,
Are one to her. As shuttlecock
Which playful damsels lightly knock
Hither and thither, so doth she
Toss gifts and favours recklessly,
Without a thought whereso they fall,
On mansion proud or cobbler's stall.
For good or bad hath she no care,
All, all alike her giftings share;
She valueth none above a pea,
Saving her child Nobility,
Misfortune's cousin, and her friend,
Who doth in Fortune's balance pend.
But Fortune, though she take away
Nobility from whom she may,
Will deal it forth to none except
Such as through every change have kept

Them pure in heart and courteous, True nobility
Upright, and good, and generous.
For never yet was man so bold
In field, but, if he chanced to hold
In heart some baseness, then would flee
Far from him fair Nobility.

Nobility I greatly prize,
Because mean spirits in her eyes
Are hateful, and I meekly pray,
Dear father, that you cast away
All proud and villain thought, and reign
The good man's prop, the bad man's bane.
Make your dear heart the dwelling-place
Of gentle love and tender grace
For all poor folk; 'tis well a king
The portals of his heart should fling
Wide open. O my father, deign
To list my speech, you then shall gain
The people's love; that lacking, poor
Is greatest king as rudest boor.'

O Phanie, precious words were these,
But never fool his folly sees
In other light than worthiest sense,
Wisdom he hears, but learns nought thence.

Thus Crœsus' heart was obdurate,
And sternly scorned he to abate
His pride; if herein wise was he,
Or foolish, thou ere long shalt see.

Cræsus makes answer to Phanie.

The fall of pride

'My daughter, neither courtesy
Nor sense you show herein,' quoth he;
'Much better versed am I than you
In what the Gods propose to do;
You do but treat me to a lie,
Interpreting most shamefully
This riddle hid within my dream:
Your gloss approacheth the extreme
Of witlessness: my dream will be
Fulfilled, I doubt not, literally:
Sure ne'er before did prophet dare
To shadow forth for dream so fair
Such vile fulfilment.
Yet will come
The Gods from out their sky-built home,
To work the end that they in sleep
Foretold to me, and I shall reap,
Dear child, from them such high reward
As they to those they love accord,
For well have I deserved of them.' "

Reason.

"Alas! the boastful apophthegm!
Fortune laid hand on him and gave
His body wastefully to wave
In wind and storm on gibbet hung,
And last be o'er the desert flung.

Doth this not plainly demonstrate
No man can cause her wheel to wait

Or stay its course, and thus be able,
Honour attained, to keep him stable?
And dost thou aught of logic know
(Which falsity from truth doth show),
Thou'lt see, where great and strong men fall,
For poor and weak, the chance how small!
But if examples thou shouldst scorn
From old authentic writings torn,
Then is it well that thou shouldst learn
That if thou wilt, thou need'st but turn
For good examples which have been
Before the eyes of all men seen,
Writ large for us in later days,
Of turmoils, battles, and affrays.
In Sicily we first may see
Lord Manfred, who by treachery
Long time unchallenged kept the land,
Till Charles of Anjou's mighty hand
O'ercame him, and there reigns to-day,
Where no man dares dispute his sway.
Him thou mayst better know perchance
As Count of Anjou and Provence,
And who by providence of God
Is lord of Sicily's fair sod.
This good King Charles from Manfred took
His kingdom not alone, but strook
The life from him; when he, with sword
Fine tempered, on the battle sward
Where first they met assailed him; high
On towering war-horse mounted: 'Die,'
He cried, 'shalt thou, for check and mate
I give thee,' but soon met his fate,

Manfred of Sicily

Death of Conradin

Amid his goodly company,
By arrow-stroke, death pierced, fell he.
It scarcely needs my page to blot
By telling of the woful lot
Of Conradin, whom Charles decreed
To death, although for him did plead
The German princes; or how fell
Henry, the prince of Spain as well,
In prison slain, as guerdon good
For one whose treason shamed manhood.
These two rash, foolish men, I ween,
Lost knights and rooks, and pawns and queen,
Till, seeing all against them scored,
They fled and left swept clear, the board.
Great fear they had lest round them spun
Should be the web they had begun,
Yet ne'er need they have been afraid
Lest they should see check-mate arrayed
Against them, since devoid of king
They fought, their foes could nowise bring
Those into check with whom they played,
Since first this noble game was made,
For never men at chess can fight
(How great soe'er the power they dight)
With check 'gainst those who fight afoot,
The pawn, or rook, or fool to boot,
Nor queen or knight, nor all the hoard
Of commoners who fill the board.
For of a truth I dare to state
What meaneth that men call 'a mate';
The king it is to whom we give
'Check,' when his men have ceased to live,

Or captive stand, and none he sees
Around him save his enemies,
And thus doth he in check remain,
Escape debarred, resistance vain.
And thus saith Attalus the wise,
Who did the game of chess devise
With worthy wit; its subtle trick
He found when deep arithmetic
He taught, and Polycraticus,
Of John of Sarum, showeth us
How he the intricate movements set,
Wherewith the game is played e'en yet.

The game of chess

From off the field these leaguers cleared,
Since to be captive ta'en they feared
Most bitterly. What say I then?
They feared captivity, these men?
Nay, but far worse; fierce death they fled,
Which ne'ertheless they sufferèd,
For in this wretched game had they
With impious daring played their play.
Despising faith, estranged from God,
They madly his chastising rod
Had bared their backs to; Holy Church
They braved, and found them left a-lurch.
And if their fortunes lay in wreck,
And on them cried their foes 'a check!'
What wonder? Who would cover them,
Or who their tide of misery stem?
For when the onset came their queen
They lost, as well might be foreseen,
And then this worthless, foolish king
Lost rooks, knights, pawns, and everything.

Charles of Anjou

Forsooth she nought was present there
But worn with grief, and wan with care
Could not defend herself nor flee,
Hearing how Manfred wretchedly
Lay dead and cold, head, hands, and feet.
And when these tidings men repeat
To good King Charles, how both these men
Like caitiffs fled the combat, then
On both he freely worked his will,
Giving command to slay and kill
Them and their fellows who had stood
To aid their impious hardihood.

This noble prince, whose deeds I sing,
Of many a tale hath been the spring.
May God preserve both night and day
His body, soul, and heirs I pray,
And grant such wisdom as ne'er fails:
The pride he conquered of Marseilles,
Whose rebel burghers' heads lopped he
Ere yet high rule in Sicily
To him was given, where he as king
Was crowned, and vicar minist'ring
For all the Empire: but to write
His deeds at full must one indite
A ponderous tome.
See what became
Of all these favourites of fame
And Fortune.
Doth she not, I ask,
Make fools of those who calmly bask
Beneath her smiles?
At first they find
All fair, then comes a stab behind.

Victims of Fortune

And thou, who joy'dst to kiss the Rose,
Through which to thee such misery grows
As seems would never more abate,
Dost thou desire it for thy fate
Ever to live in soft delight
Kissing fair roses, day and night?
Now swear I stoutly by my head,
Good sense within thee seemeth dead.
Lest thou beneath thy sorrow sink,
I counsel thee to muse and think
Of Manfred and of Conradin
And Henry, who, than Saladin,
Did deadlier crimes, since war they made
'Gainst Holy Church their nurse, who laid
Her curse on them, and mark how died
Those of Marseilles through fatal pride.
With ancient lore too well acquaint
Art thou that I again need paint
Vile Nero's crime, or Crœsus' fall,
Such lessons might'st thou well recall,
Showing how vain their power to stay
The turn of Fortune's wheel one day.
I'faith! the freeman who in pride
Of freedom scorneth all beside,
Forgets how mighty Crœsus fell
From freedom's heaven to serfdom's hell,
And in his memory holds he not
Sad Hecuba's unhappy lot,
The wife of Priam, nor the fate
Of Sisygambis, who the great
Darius, king of Persia, bore,
Yet Alexander fell before;

Study Homer's page

All these o'er realms in freedom reigned,
Yet slaves became when Fortune waned.
'Fore God I count it shame to thee
That, having studied history,
Thou ne'ertheless hast clean forgot
Examples which thou well shouldst wot
From out great Homer's page; why spend
Thy time in reading if the end
Is but forgetfulness, and nought
Thou hast by all thy study bought?
Who is there if thou still lackst wit
Except thyself to thank for it?
Each man great benefit will find
If Homer's lessons in his mind
Are duly stored; each word he said
Should be with care rememberèd
While life endures, and he whose heart
Pastures thereon shall ne'er depart
From wisdom's ways, but surely know
To tread her holy path, nor go
Therefrom: he no mischance need fear,
But safely through the world may steer,
Whatever haps of good or bad,
Hard, soft, sweet, bitter, bright or sad.
For he so perfectly doth paint
Dame Fortune's tricks and manners quaint,
That every man may mark the sense
Who's blest with slight intelligence.
'Tis strange thy brain should lie a-waste
If e'er thou Homer's wit didst taste,
But this insensate game of love
Would seem all better sense to shove

Aside. To make my meaning clear
I'll tell a tale, thereto give ear:

Jupiter's two wells

Great Jupiter hath dight two wells
Or water-tuns, as Homer tells,
Before the threshold of his door,
From which nor youth nor grandsire hoar,
Nor buxom dame, nor damsel slim,
(Nor young nor old, nor fair nor grim),
Who at his hands their being take,
But drink a draught their thirst to slake,
And o'er this inn, to all men free,
Fortune presides as deity,
And open-handed doth assign
To all who come, of well-spiced wine
Or wormwood, great or little cups,
But every man some liquor sups;
Her hand deals out or more or less,
As pleaseth best her fickleness.
And day by day the drinkers come
For barrels, hogsheads, gallons some,
And some for quarts and pints, or e'en
A palmful or a suplet mean,
As Fortune chooseth to bestow,
And cross or kind she haps to grow;
For while to some she's soft and good,
To others hard as ebon wood.
And no man such great happiness
Can boast him, but that some distress
Shall come to dash his cup of joy;
Yet shall not misery destroy
Wise men's content and peace of mind,
But each in darkest hour shall find

Sighs and tears unmanly

Some comforting, unless despair
O'erwhelm them. None, how great soe'er
His wisdom or his learning be,
For this can find a remedy.

What purpose think you then can serve
These sighs and tears which so unnerve
Thy manhood? Cheerfully accept
Whatever Fortune's hand hath kept
In store for thee of good or bad,
Joyous or dull, or bright or sad.

'Twere vain to tell the many turns
Of Fortune's wheel, by which she earns
The name of fickle; pile and cross
She plays, a game of gain and loss,
And Fortune so her gifts doth cast
Around, that whether first or last
A man may be, he scarce can say
On loss or gain from day to day.

Of her awhile I'll stay my tongue,
Although perchance I may ere long
Return thereto, when unto three
Righteous requests thou answerest me,
For readily from lips depart
Those things a man hath most at heart.
And shouldst thou my requests refuse,
In no degree mayst thou excuse
Thy folly, that can spare thee shame.
I firstly then request and claim
Thy love, and next that thou reject
Dan Cupid, thirdly, nought expect

From Fortune; and if thou too weak
Feel for this triple bond, I'll seek
To spare thy strength, and will but ask
One simple boon, to light thy task.
List then my first demand; if thou
Thereto with ready heart wilt bow,
Then shalt thou from the other two
Be freed.
Unless thy mind askew
Be turned as one who's drunk or mad,
Thou'lt see that he whose soul is clad
In Reason's garb must needs despise
Fortune and Love in carnal guise.
My well-loved friend, great Socrates,
Was one who scorned the vanities
Of Fortune and of Love alike,
God grant his great example strike
Thy heart, and make it one with mine,
And nought for this, as I opine,
Is lacking but thy word. Grant this,
My first request, and then, ywis,
Thou of the other two art quit.
Unglue thy lips, and therefrom flit
Thy answer—does thy heart agree?
Cry yea! and thou shalt find thee free
From further quests. Serve me alone,
Nor suffer treacherous love to wone
Within thy breast.
Cupid hath trapped
Thy courage, and thy memory sapped,
And round thy spirit's eyes doth bind
A web whose woof obscures thy mind."

The example of Socrates

Here the Lover replies to Reason.

Love before all else

"Nay, nay!" I cried, "that would but be
To treat my master treacherously,
Who hath the power to make me rich
With wealth that monarchs' palms might itch
In vain for. His kind hand will give
To me the Rose if I but live
True to my oath, and if I gain
That prize, I count all else but vain.
Your Socrates, and all his riches,
I value not three bodkin stitches;
I pray you speak of him no more;
My master, Love, I prize before
Aught else, and joyfully confess
His might, his love, his tenderness.
Nay, though he led the way to hell
I'd follow him and cry ''tis well.'
My heart belongs no more to me,
'Tis his to deal with utterly,
And past persuasion am I loth
To make to any other oath
Of fealty; my testament
Fair-Welcome hath, wherein I've spent
My very soul; my fate is sealed
By law that ne'er can be repealed.
My precious Rose I would not change
For all your promise, nor estrange
My heart therefrom.
It seems to me
You lack the flower of courtesy,
For erstwhile did you cullions name,
A word no maid, with sense of shame,

Would set her tongue to. More than much
I marvel one so sage should smutch
Her speech with such a phrase, unless
She glossed it into seemliness.
Oft have I heard a gentle nurse
Washing an infant say 'the purse'
(While she her love on it hath spent
With many a kiss and blandishment)
For that you named so shamelessly.
Speak out and say then, do I lie?" 7320

Reason reproached

Then Reason smiled a merry smile,
And smiling, thus she spake the while:

Reason.

"Fair friend, I may with justice call
(Yet nowise under censure fall)
That by its name which if not good
Is nothing; no unseemlihood
I see therein. I feel no shame
For that which none as sin can blame.
Nay, even though 'twere thing unfit,
Yet may I fitly speak of it. 7330
Rest you assured that when of sin
A matter savours, nought therein
Would I take part. But 'tis without
A taint of sin to speak about
Such things as God's own hands have made,
Free of all gloss, and unafraid
Discourse of what in paradise
Our Maker ordered to suffice

The Lover feels outraged

For carrying on the human race
(Formed in the image of his face),
And which, except for these, had been
Void of succession, as I ween.
But in his wisdom God supplied
The purse and staff, which might provide,
By natural force, the race of men
In undisturbed succession; then
From age to age would mother earth
Rejoice, from whom they erst had birth.
For when one dies another lives;
That sire God takes, this child he gives.
And so likewise with beast and bird,
Some flit, but nature's force hath stirred
Others to fill their place; through time
Ring life and death in equal chime."

The Lover.

Cried I, "You do but make things worse,
For now I reckon most perverse
And lewd your speech, not only bad
You seem to me, but downright mad.
For if so be that everything
From God's unerring hand doth spring,
As you have said, at least not he
'Twas taught your tongue this ribaldry."

Reason.

"Fair friend," wise Reason said, "thou mak'st
A grievous error if thou tak'st
Folly for valiance; that it ne'er
Hath been, nor shall be; speak, nor spare,

If so thou wilt, my heart is fain
Thy good esteem and love to gain;
Talk on if so thou wilt, and I
Will stand to hear thee silently.
Ready am I to suffer all
That may be; so thou dost not fall
From bad to worse, I care not how
Thou treat'st me, I my neck will bow.
It seems as if thou'dst draw me on
To talk as fool or simpleton:
That is but vain, for thine own good
I speak to thee with hardihood:
Thine enemy forsooth were I
If I should stoop me angrily
To check thy folly. Vengeance is
An evil weapon, but, ywis,
Slander is worse. Some fitter way
Than that I'd surely find to pay
My vengeance were I thereto driven;
And if it happed that you had given
By word or deed offence to me,
'Twould be more fit that secretly
I gave reproof without disgrace
Or shame to thee; and if in face
Of kind and friendly counsel thou
Laughed me to scorn, 'twere then, I trow,
Better before some magistrate,
Whate'er the grievance were, to state
It calmly, and redress amain,
Receive or other vengeance gain
Unblameful. No desire to scold
My neighbours have I, or to hold

Reason defends herself

The tongue needs a bridle

Them up to scorn, nor through my tongue
Shall good or evil folk be stung.
Let all and each their burdens bear,
And each and all confess them where
It please them, or confess them not,
The case is none of mine, God wot.
No lust have I to say or do
Such things as folly lead unto.
Although to keep a silent tongue
May be small merit, yet among
The foulest crimes it is to say
Things it behoves us hide away.

The tongue hath sorely need of rein,
As Ptolemy doth well explain
In that fair book, the 'Almagest';
For in its opening he addressed
Himself to show that those do well
Who keep their tongues beneath the spell
Of silence, saving when they raise
Loud voice to God in prayer or praise,
For then need men seek no excuse
However much their tongues they loose,
For never yet was tongue too free
In praising God's high majesty.
Of due obedience, love, and fear
No mortal who life's bark doth steer
E'er gave his God too much; his gift
It is that man from earth may lift
His soul to heaven.

Great Cato said
The same, as those well know who've read
His book, for we therein may find
He hath the highest praise assigned

To those who strictly keep the tongue
'Neath bridle; 'Be not found among
Such folk as let their tongues run wild
In foolish, brutal speech, but filed
And polished be thy words:' much good
Christians may learn from paganhood.

A daughter of the Deity

On one thing will I make remark,
Although it be without a spark
Of hatred, blame or bitterness.
Saving thy grace, thou dost express
Thyself in terms which but reveal
That thou within thy heart dost feel
Displeasure great 'gainst me, and why?
My Father, who beyond the sky
Rules o'er the angels and no less
Is than the type of nobleness
To those on earth, most graciously
Hath in all good instructed me.
I by his precepts guide my speech,
Nor hesitate to give to each
Created thing its proper name,
Free from all gloss; but if you claim
That when God made all things 'twas not
From him they names distinctive got,
I answer that herein forsooth
Your words are not divorced from truth,
Though had it pleased him, well he might
Have done so when the world he dight.
But his good pleasure 'twas that I
Should name all things distinctively,
And indicate their use and sense
To further man's intelligence,

Nonames unseemly

And thereto gave he me that gift
Of speech, which man o'er brutes doth lift,
But to thy folly doth appear
More comely as it grows less clear.
Thou good authority mayst find
For that I say, if so inclinèd,
For, in his school, great Plato said,
That God the gift of talking shed
On man that, learning, he might teach
Others, and greater learning reach.
This proverb which I set in rhyme,
Was taught by Plato in old time
(Than whom ne'er lived more witful wight)
Within the book Timæus hight.
And since a word thou tak'st to task
I used erewhile, I dare to ask
Before the face of God, if I
Perchance had called Jove's cullions by
The name of relics, and had named
Saints' relics cullions, hadst thou blamed
That name and straightway wouldst thou find
Relics in no degree behind
The other as a blameful word?
'Twas I who gave the names which stirred
Your anger, and they are to me
Devoid all taint of ribaldry.
One's free to use such words, i'faith,
Yet rest assured that nought he saith
To reprehend. Now if I'd named
The cullions relics, nought ashamed
Thou'dst been thereat, but hadst been fired
With approbation, and admired

The word as something quite divine,
And in the church wouldst thou incline
Thine head before them set in gold
And silver, and wouldst doubtless hold
Thy breath whilst with adoring kiss
Thou knelt'st before them. God, who is
All wise, will note the word I say,
Yet nought will turn his face away
In wrath.

Modern squeamishness

By body of Saint Omer!
Dream'st thou that I do ill whene'er
I mention God's good work? Shall I
To suit thee blame the Deity?
Each thing it pleased him to create
Must be by some name designate,
Therefore is thy contention dross,
That names for things we needs must gloss.
If noble dames of France use not
These words, the reason is, I wot,
Simply because the usance they
Have lost in this our squeamish day.
But if the fashion 'twas, no sin
Or harm fair dames would find therein.

In all the world there's nought more strong
Than custom, whether right or wrong.
Men hate new ways until they through
Time's course are old, which once were new.
Each woman who essays to speak
Hereof some periphrase will seek
As purse and staff, or things, or horns
(E'en as she gloved her hand 'gainst thorns),
But time and place according, nought
Objects if by such thorns she's caught,

Plain speech is good

And following custom gives a name
To suchlike things, untouched by shame.
No fault I find therewith, but I
My privilege claim equally
A thistle not to call a rose,
Or otherwise good words to gloze.
Within the schools one oft may hear
Lessons in parables made clear,
But grievous error those would make
Who should each word for gospel take.
And when of cullions I discoursed,
You put upon that word a forced
And needless sense. When I to you
Of those things spake, 'twas with the view
Of showing briefly what I meant
In parable, thereto was bent
My reasoning. Whosoe'er should see
The words of scripture literally,
Ere long would pierce the sense obscure
That lies beneath their coverture.
Uplift the veil that hideth truth,
And bright it flashes forth forsooth.
This shalt thou find if thou rehearse
The noble stories writ in verse
By ancient poets. Great delight
Will flood thy soul if thou aright
Dost read, for thou shalt see unrolled
Secret philosophy of old,
Profiting thou amused shalt be,
And thine amusement profit thee,
For oft their quip and crank and fable
Is wondrous good and profitable,

And much deep subtle thought they hide
'Neath veils torn easily aside.
Now have I given two words that should
By thee be scarce misunderstood,
And best were taken by the letter,
Gloss them thou mayst, but nought wilt better."

The Lover foregoes blame

The Lover.

"Lightly will all who know the tongue
Of our fair France allow you strung
Your words so clearly that no man
In any sort or fashion can
Misunderstand them. Needless quite
Is further talk to prove you right.
The fiction, fable, metaphor,
That poets wrote in days of yore,
I've no intention to expound.
Right joyfully will I resound
The pleasant tale of what hath happed
To me, if but my life be capped
With such rich guerdon as should pay
My constancy for many a day,
In suchwise as all men might see
Clearly whate'er hath happed to me.
I grant you to be well excused
The manner you your tongue have used,
And nowise shall I strive to fit
Your phrase with gloss, nor think of it.
But for sweet sake of God above,
Forbear to blame my ardent love.
If I be mad, 'tis my affair,
And well content am I to bear

Reason dismissed

The yoke of Love, and ever be
A slave 'neath his sweet mastery.
If I am mad, regard me not,
To Love I'm vowed, whate'er my lot,
And to the Rose have given troth-plight:
If wrong, 'tis wrong; if right, 'tis right.
If now my love I gave to you,
Alas! I then must prove untrue
To my sweet Rose, and can but be
A traitor either unto thee
Or Love, my master. But I've said
Already, that my heart is dead
To all except the Rose, and when
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XXIX. lines 3623–3688, Fr. 3597–3662 . 121

Queen Venus' ardent torch doth fire
The Lover's bosom with desire
So fervid, that he dares the Rose
To kiss, in faith 'twill heal his woes.

CHAP. PAGE

XXX. lines 3689–3830, Fr. 3663–3800 . 124

Here green-eyed Jealousy doth scold
Fair-Welcome for the falsehoods told
By Evil-Tongue against him, he
Loves to load men with calumny.

XXXI. lines 3831–3972, Fr. 3801–3932 . 129

Herein 'tis told how Fear and Shame,
In deep concern, to Danger came,
Demanding wherefore spared he blows
'Gainst those who dared approach the Rose.

XXXII. lines 3973–4314, Fr. 3933–4282 . 134

This tells how Jealousy, by spite
Urged on, a towering prison dight
Amidst the precinct, wherein she
Immured Fair-Welcome, for that he
Had let the Lover's lips once press
The Rose, through courteous kindliness.

XXXIII. lines 4315–4496, Fr. 4283–4450 . 145

Dan William Lorris when he died,
Had written nothing more beside
The verses thou hast read. But when
A forty years had flitted, then
John Clopinel the end did speed—
Behold his work, which all may read.

XXXIV. lines 4497–5008, Fr. 4451–4952 . 151

Herein we meet again sweet Reason,
Who ever, in or out of season,
Findeth, before all else, delight
For erring men the path to dight.

CHAP. PAGE

XXXV. lines 5009–5902, Fr. 4953–5838 169

Herein the needy man doth stand
Before his friend, and at his hand
Requires that of his goods he give
Fair share, that he in ease may live.

XXXVI. lines 5903–5946, Fr. 5839–5888 200

Learn how Virginius made his plea
To Appius, who corruptedly
His fair and well-loved daughter gave
To Claudius for his chattel slave.

XXXVII. lines 5947–6228, Fr. 5889–6162 201

This telleth how—the judgment given—
Virginius unto madness driven,
Strake off his well-loved daughter's head,
Though to her life his life was wed,
Preferring rather that his child
Should die unstained than live defiled;
Then the sad head to Appius sent,
Who met his well-earned chastisement.

XXXVIII. lines 6229–6518, Fr. 6163–6440 211

Unto the Lover Reason shows
Dame Fortune's wheel, and how it goes.
Pointing that lack of power hath she
O'er men, brave, resolute, and free.

XXXIX. lines 6519–6576, Fr. 6441–6494 221

How Emperor Nero, in his mad
And cruel unchecked fury, bade
In daylight clear, before his eyes,
His minions to anatomise
His mother living, and the spot
Disclose where he was erst begot.

CHAP. PAGE

XL. lines 6577–6794, Fr. 6495–6710 . 223

How Seneca, that noble man,
Succumbed beneath his pupil's ban;
Set in a bath to die was he,
By Nero's savage cruelty.

XLI. lines 6795–6884, Fr. 6711–6796 . 230

This tells how Nero sought to hide
Within a garden, where he died,
Self-slain. Thus, coward-like, life's stage
He fled, nor dared the people's rage.

XLII. lines 6885–7606, Fr. 6797–7526 . 233

This tells how Phanie to the king
Gave warning that his pride would bring
Him shameful death. The dream but sung
His knell, when he on gallows hung.

END OF VOL. I.

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